CAR AND DRIVER

MAY/JUNE 2025

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FULL COMPARISON TEST

The Ultimate Supersedan Battle

Will the new BMW M5 beat the Audi RS7 and the Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing?

FROM SURF TO SNOW: ROAD-TESTING THE NEW TOYOTA 4RUNNER

IS AN ALL-WEATHER TIRE THE ONLY ONE YOU'LL EVER NEED?

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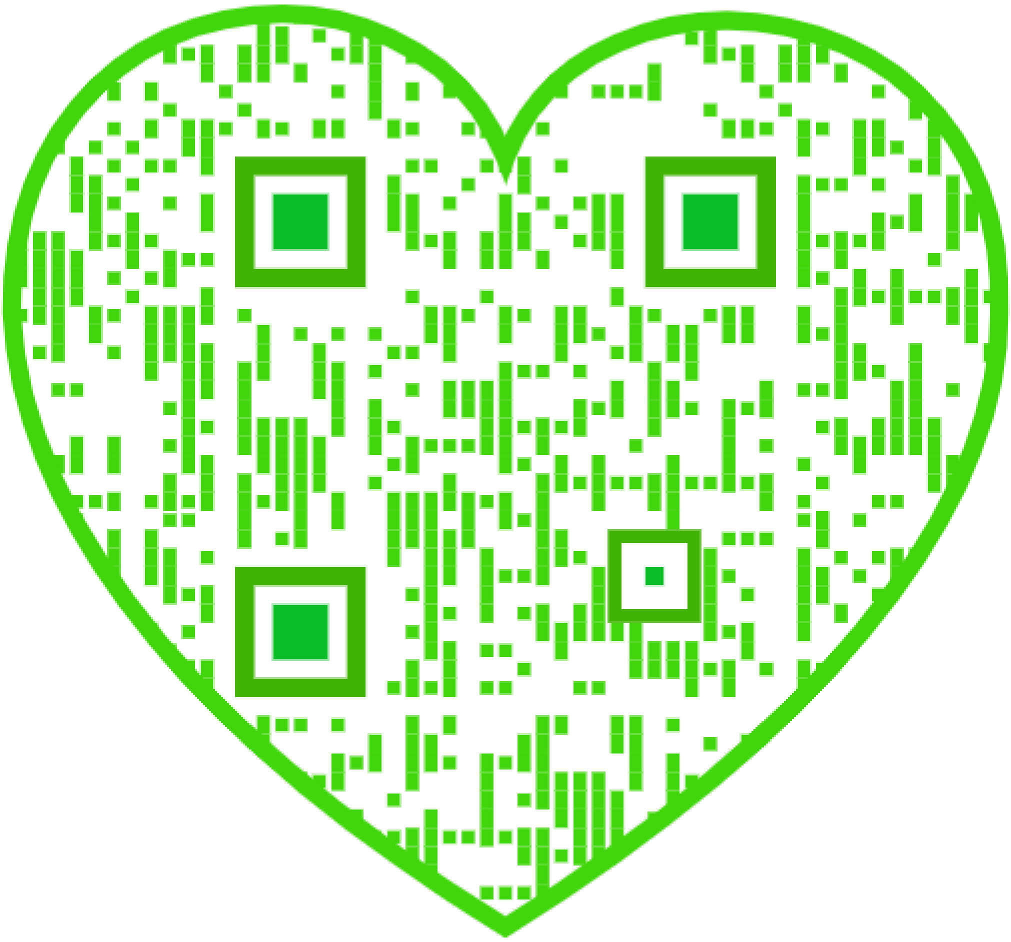

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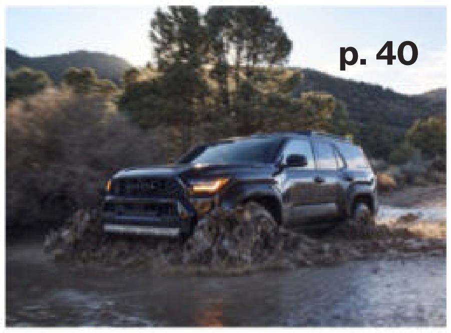
Ultra-High-Performance Sports Sedans

Audi RS7 Performance vs. BMW M5 vs. Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing.

By Andrew Krok



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ROAD TEST

Toyota 4Runner

We step into the idealized lifestyle of a Toyota 4Runner owner to see how the 2025 Trailhunter enables our sport-utility fantasies.

By Ezra Dyer

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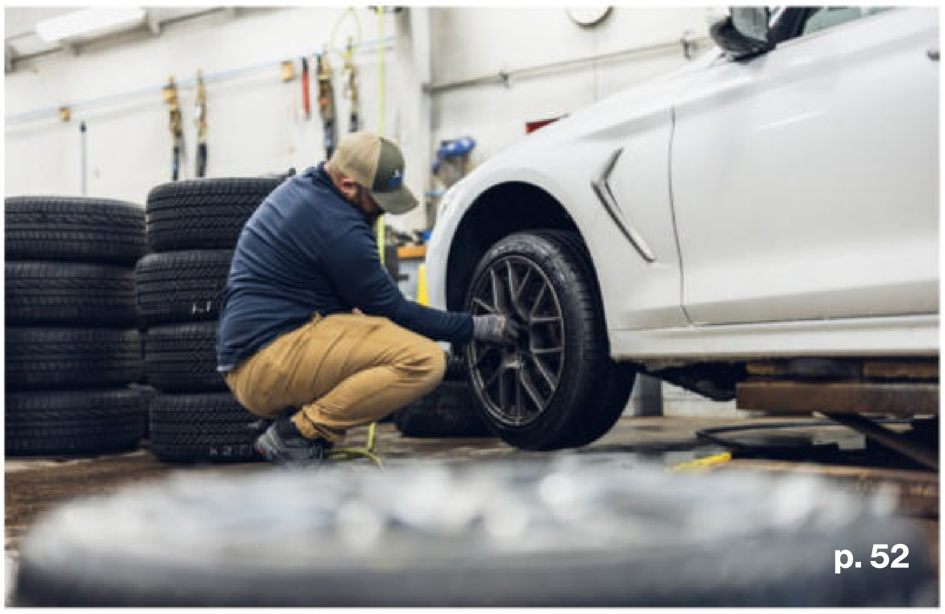
Weather or Not

All-weather tires promise to be everything to everyone. We test five of them to see whether they're really the only tires you'll ever need.

By Austin Irwin



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By John Phillips

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Letter from the Editor

–

Tony Quiroga

Imagine a teen trying to pass muster with a driving instructor.

That's how I'd describe the experience of Waymo's autonomous Jaguar I-Pace taking me to my friend's house in San Francisco. I wish there were an inflatable pilot like the one in the film *Airplane!* Riding with an invisible person in the front seat turning the steering wheel is an act of faith and represents a potential future I'm struggling with.

I love driving. I love the freedom, I love the sense of control, and I love having the ability and know-how to push a car to its limits. I don't want to give up a pleasurable act to a robot, but given a situation where I must choose between riding with a stranger of unknown talent and riding in an autonomous car, I am surprised at the advantages of a driverless ride.

Waymo's self-driving fleet operates in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Austin, Texas. You're thinking, "Surely one of those locations must have an inflatable autopilot." They don't, and don't call me Shirley.

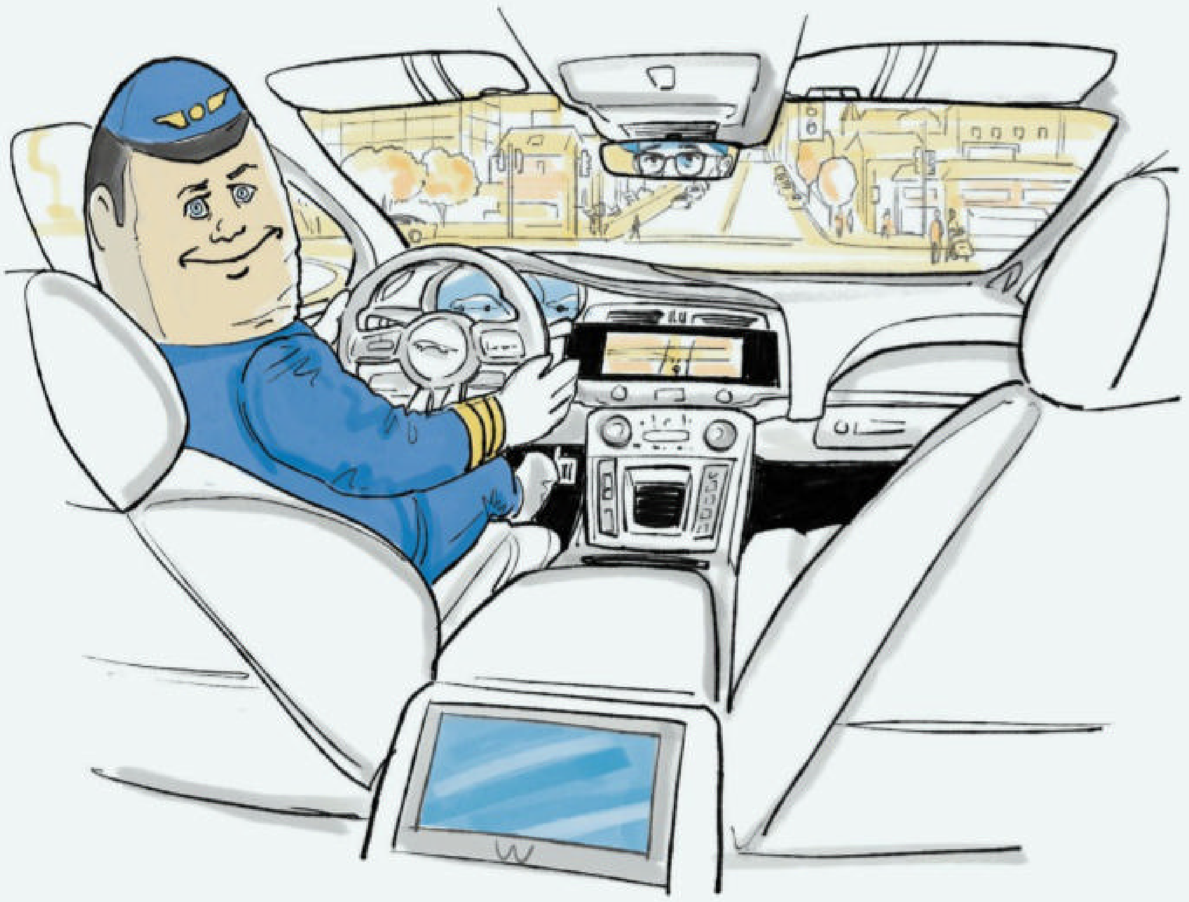

ILLUSTRATION BY BRETT AFFRUNTI

Granted, I can see where this road leads—autonomous driving coming for our keys or the jobs of hardworking hacks—and I don't like it. But I have to admit that an inanimate chauffeur has advantages. For one, there's no one to clip nauseating Febreze Evening Woods air fresheners to the vents. Why can't a car just smell like a car? Being a passenger in a Waymo also means silence. If you're the type who dreads a haircut because of awkward small talk with the barber, you'll enjoy the quiet. Eliminating the human brings conversational relief and potential health benefits in avoiding maladies ranging from a cough to murder. There's no chance that your Waymo driver is the Zodiac Killer.

For one, a Waymo is way dumber than the Zodiac. This is still an imperfect system. There are videos online of waylaid Waymos stuck at intersections, flummoxed by construction zones, and stymied by something as simple as a double-parked delivery truck. In April 2024, six Waymos blocked the entrance to California's 101 freeway when one pulled over in a construction area and others (Waymos and cars piloted by actual people) followed suit. The company had to send a roadside-assistance team to unclog the mess. Humans figure out things that Waymos can't, a distinct advantage.

My 15-minute ride through San Francisco proved uneventful and would've been downright boring if I hadn't been watching so intently for mistakes. I kept hoping to find some traffic-causing hesitation or a Frank Bullitt move, but the I-Pace sailed along with surprising grace. It brought itself to a stop without jarring me and accelerated from lights like the rest of traffic (slowly). It maintained speed, changed lanes, turned, pulled up to the curb, and navigated jaywalkers looking at their phones and other cars without a curse word. There's a high level of rule-following and caution that most drivers don't engage in unless a police cruiser or a DMV employee is present. Being stuck behind a Waymo can be annoying, as its adherence to the law doesn't always align with how traffic moves. But that's not too obvious to the rider. There's a degree of predictability and consistency that my recent Uber drivers haven't had, their 4.98-star ratings notwithstanding. And the Waymo doesn't text, talk to its cousin Chester on the phone, or nod off while driving.

Waymo says its driverless car is eight times less likely to have an airbag deployment or an injury in a crash for every million miles traveled in San Francisco. It works surprisingly well and should continue to improve. But maybe instead of teaching artificial intelligence how to drive, we should invest in teaching humans to become highly skilled drivers. Imagine that future.

ROAD & TRACK EXPERIENCES

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2025

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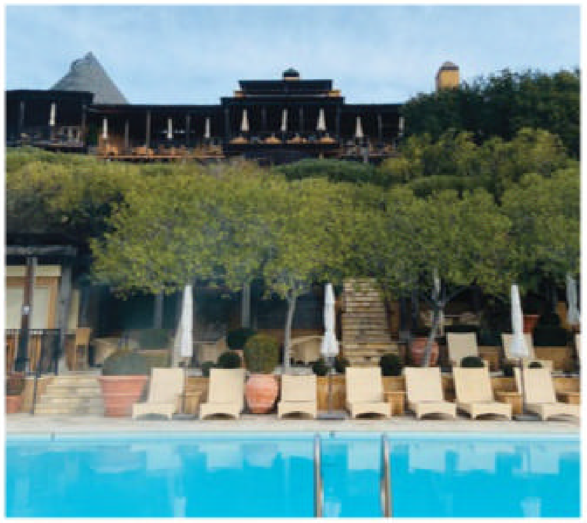

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BACKFIRES

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Think of it as the peer-review section of the magazine, hosted by your pal Ed.

CAR AND DRIVER
10BEST
CARS
TRUCKS
SUVS
VANS

A PERFECT 10

I think you need to watch *Sesame Street* again [10Best, January/February 2025]. Specifically, scenes with the Count. I'm not convinced you know how many 10 is. Ah ah ah!
—Zach Lashley
Denver, NC

It was not a good idea to run the 10Best article as a run-on sentence. It was hard to read and needlessly so. Why did you ditch the format of each 10Best winner getting its own distinct entry? Not an improvement at all. Please do not repeat this experiment. Keep the magazine easy to read and clearly laid out.
—Ron Santos
West Warwick, RI

Predicated in part on your inveterate enthusiasm for the 10Best champ Honda Accord, I have been recommending Accords to friends and family for decades. So last year, when my wife and I were seeking an affordable new front-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive family sedan with a manual transmission, the Accord was the first vehicle we considered. Alas, no manual, no sale. In your 10Best piece, regarding the Accord, Joe Lorio wrote, "While other automakers are walking away from mid-size sedans, Honda's commitment to the Accord seems as strong as ever." Too bad Honda walked away from its commitment to the enthusiast driver.
—Vic Lucariello
Archuleta County, CO

In your 10Best section, the Hyundai Ioniq 5 has a listed power range of 168 to 641 horsepower. Is there anything else in production with that large of a spread between available powertrains?
—Daniel
Arvada, CO
The Lucid Air offers 430 to 1234 horsepower—Ed.

The comment about the Porsche Boxster/Cayman as "cars that elevate even a mundane errand into something special" really struck home. There is nothing that I enjoy more than taking mine down the beach road with the top down to the grocery store. The two trunks easily hold all the groceries for the week. It always puts a smile on my face and makes the day a better one.
—David E. Enochs
Manteo, NC

COSTCO
WHOLESALE

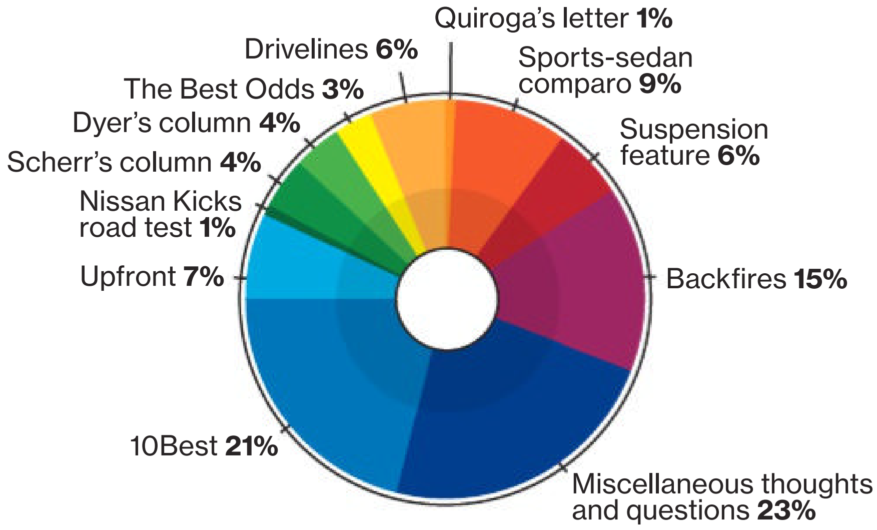
Reading your 10Best issue, with not one but two Cadillac Blackwings, CT4-V and CT5-V, I once again must lament the lack of coverage of the simply marvelous, simple V. With 360 horsepower, 405 pound-feet of torque, and all-wheel drive, this sleeper is the ideal daily driver in snowy New England. It's quicker and lighter than my Taurus SHO, with buttoned-down handling better than a BMW, and it's capable of commanding passing speeds. I love it every time I get behind the wheel. At $58,000, this is a lot of car for the money. For everyday usefulness, style, performance, quality, and value, I can't think of a better choice. Please see if you can spare a page or two to enlighten readers about this hidden gem.
—Jay Jacobowitz
Brattleboro, VT
There's nothing new about it since we road-tested it in 2020, so you'll have to settle for the length of this letter—Ed.

TO THE MOON

Regarding "Quarter-Million-Mile Baby" [January/February 2025], what's the big deal about some guy putting a quarter-million miles on his Ferrari? That's an everyday occurrence on most any American iron, and without replacing 136 spark plugs, eight water pumps, and countless other miscellaneous parts. Plus, this car had its engine replaced, making his reliability claim a moot point. I have enough funds to afford a Ferrari, and the reason for that is I'm smart enough not to buy a money pit like that in the first place!
—Jack Hanrahan
Waterford, WI
Money pit? Think of it this way: That Ferrari probably put his mechanic's kid through college—Ed.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRETT AFFRUNTI

THE SQUEAKY WHEEL



QUESTIONING THE LIST: Not surprisingly, the 10Best issue inspired many letters and emails questioning and wondering about 10Best. Backfires on EV of the Year was also a popular topic.

Funny that there was not one word about the 2025 Lincoln Nautilus in your 10Best. I guess that must be because *MotorTrend* named it SUV of the Year.
—Joe Pratt
Plymouth, MI
That reminds me of when they gave the 1991 Chevrolet Caprice a similar "award"—Ed.

"Same old, same old" was my immediate reaction to your 10Best list. Many of the vehicles were repeats from last year's list. The Honda Accord is so automatic for you that you should just call this the Accord + 9Best list. Seems like you need a new format for this competition to inject some excitement.
—Tom
El Dorado Hills, CA
Does the Lincoln Nautilus excite you?—Ed.

The January/February issue is the most well rounded in years. 10Best? Check. Review of an econobox? Check. Long technical article? Check. Review of an outlandish specialty vehicle? Check. Your next review assignments: a middle-of-the-road Costco runner and a roundup of realistic PHEVs.
—Andrew Laurence
Costa Mesa, CA

WINS AND LOSSES

Regarding your challenge to engine makers to build an inline-seven in "Winners and Losers" [January/February 2025], you should know they already exist. Well, maybe not for cars, but for ships. MaK, a ship-engine company in Kiel, Germany, produced the 7M43C, an inline seven-cylinder engine making 7000 kilowatts (9387 horsepower) at 500 rpm. Maybe there are other inline-sevens?
—Jim Peltier
West Lafayette, IN

GET YOUR KICKS

I don't know what this Nissan Kicks is kicking, but it sure ain't ass ["Pumped-Up Kicks," January/February 2025]. A Versa with two flat tires will tear it up at a stoplight. Let's see: no power, 400 pounds overweight, too expensive, and a stupid name.
—Andre Jaussaud
Caldwell, ID

In your recent review of the redesigned-for-2025 Kicks, I was pleasantly surprised by your inclusion and comparison of interior noise levels. I know I can't be the only one who takes interior noise into account when comparing vehicles. Please continue to measure and include cabin noise levels in future reviews and tests!
—Patrick W.
Bellbrook, OH

SEDANISSIMUS

Longtime listener, first-time caller. A comment on your BMW M3 versus Cadillac CT4-V Blackwing versus Alfa Romeo Giulia comparison, which I enjoyed [January/February 2025]: You've forgotten that even supermodels have those who are sick of their sh#t. It makes me wonder whether Mr. Dyer was involved in *C/D*'s previous long-term test of the betrothed Italian? It went something like this: "We've fallen hard for this stylish and thrilling car and recommend it." Then the months passed living with it (more like living without it, as you left it perpetually at the dealer, hoping they could find anyone who knew how to fix it). And then came a lease-only recommendation and, ultimately, "don't even rent this car." Now, not a mention of this bereavement in the comparo? Rightfully, you're again lured by the siren song of the 2.9-liter V-6. Now you're effusive again. "We'd love to own all three of these cars." Really? Have you forgotten the last time you and Ms. Giulia went steady?
—Robert S.
Vancouver, BC
A sample of one should not determine the lifelong opinion of any car. Our long-term woes were largely a very bad dealership experience, and in that Giulia's defense, it never left us stranded—Ed.

Dyer states that the Caddy CT4-V Blackwing purchase would set one's 401(k) back $85,010. Okay, but what about the federal and possibly state tax on that withdrawal? Worse yet, if you are under 59½, there is a 10 percent early withdrawal penalty by Uncle Sam. An expensive car indeed. (Notice I did not mention the opportunity cost of keeping that money invested.)
—Evan Meltzer
Palmyra, VA

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Your magazine is a great read. But I have noticed something: The Backfires section—which *we* write—is getting bigger and bigger. Does this mean we're on *C/D* staff? What retirement benefits do you offer?
—John W. Simpson
Beverly Hills, MI
Retirement benefits include a 401(k) match (once you're vested) and these Maserati-branded racing gloves that are still moist from K.C. Colwell's sweat—Ed.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL SIMARI

BACKFIRES

I'm the lucky owner of a BMW M4 Competition xDrive and a Cadillac ATS coupe, which are comparable to the vehicles in the comparison test. The Cadillac is truly an amazing car, as is the BMW M4 Comp. The Bimmer is much quicker. The Caddy has the best steering. Both are trouble-free and outstanding rides.
—Ron Werby
Gulfport, MS
Sure thing, Mr. Humblebrag, but how do you feel about the Lincoln Nautilus?—Ed.

Nice to see the eight-year-old Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, everyone's favorite new car of the year in 2017, in a fresh comparo with the latest sedans from Munich and Lansing. And no surprise that its computer barked at the testers a few times. So, here are a few hints to make Giulia Quad (GQ) ownership less fretful:
(1) Stick with the OEM Pirellis. They're like having cheetah claws at each corner.
(2) Install a radar detector—permanently. The Alfa takes a bit to get to 191 mph, but it'll blast to 150 faster than you can pass gas.
(3) Permanently install a Bluetooth OBD-II code reader/reset device.
The codes tend to be as spurious as they are odd, but some may disable your Alfa. Bad news in nighttime Tucumcari, New Mexico.
(4) Consider a used GQ for yourself while prices remain reasonable. Few cars are more fun, as *C/D*'s editors recently rediscovered.
—Mike Rethman
Prescott, AZ

The sports-sedan comparison test was over when only one came with a manual. But if you'd immediately crowned the Caddy the winner, you would have missed out on all the fun. You're a sly dog, Dyer! Ever since the CTS-V wagon came out with a manual, my local Cadillac dealer cemented its place as the first stop I'd make after winning the lottery. I guess the lottery gods have kept me from winning, because Cadillac keeps getting better and better. I think Cadillac has now reached the pinnacle, lotto gods, so it's time to hand me a win!
—Ryan Hurlbert
Rural, OR

I'm too old to learn how to drive an automatic. The Cadillac CT4-V wins by default.
—Galen Farrington
Alto, NM
De-fault! De-fault!—Ed.

Suspensions of Disbelief
An in-depth look into how modern suspensions manage our broken roads.

HEAVY CHOP AHEAD: Letter writers wanted to know why we didn't include a Citroën DS in the suspension test and what happened at the printer that caused the broken headline.

RIDERS ON THE STORM

The "Suspensions of Disbelief" article [January/February 2025] was very thorough and interesting. It would have been more interesting to have a classic Citroën DS19 added to this group. I think we would have a clear winner.
—Fred Schendstok
Fuquay-Varina, NC
We were going to get a 1970s floaty-boat luxury car, but the owner got cold feet—Ed.

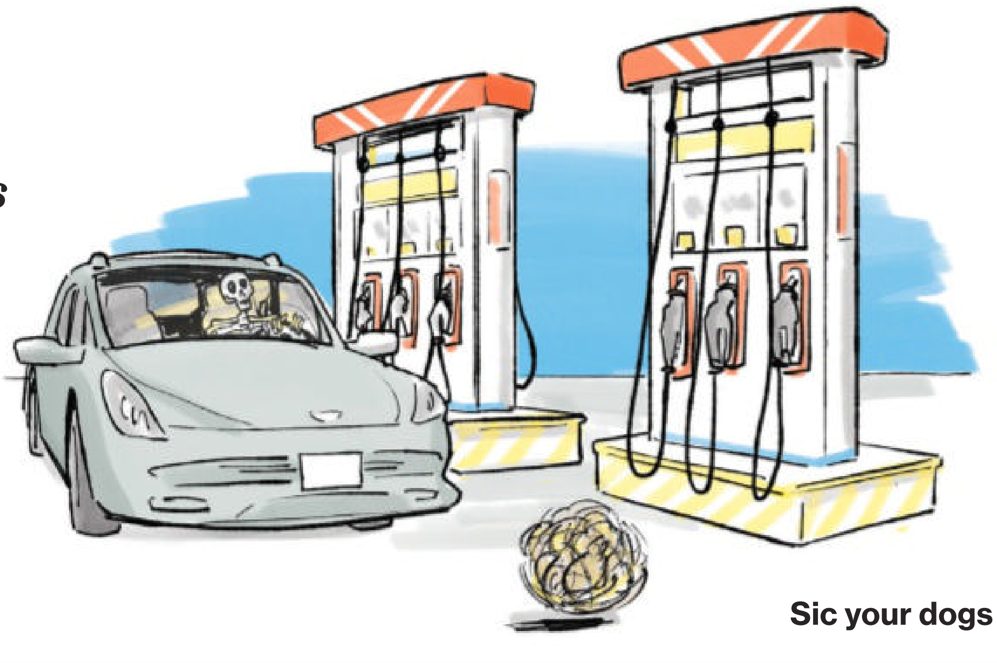
VanderWerp's article regarding suspensions was well researched and interesting, although I understood about 30 percent of it. Many thanks to Dave and his team.
—Bob Valentine
Bainbridge Island, WA
Don't worry; 30 percent is a passing grade—Ed.

In the January/February 2025 issue, editor-in-chief Tony Quiroga talks about scientific ways of analyzing and quantifying ride quality, saying, "Testing director Dave VanderWerp . . . decided to untangle the complex interplay of the parts between the pavement and your pants." VanderWerp could have saved a lot of money by simply taking off his pants while driving the vehicles to get a more direct feel for the topic. Those pesky pants just get in the way. I hope this was helpful.
—Bucket-Seat Bob
Boerne, TX

Looking at the chart comparing interior sound levels of the five test cars over different road surfaces, I was amazed to see the Corvette as the quietest of the bunch. But wait; can't be. A Rolls is in the test group. Looking more closely, I realized the scale was inverted (read, "upside down")—lower decibels on top, higher decibels on the bottom. My pal Ed. will undoubtedly retort, "Orienting the scale in this way places the 'winner' on top of the chart." Really? Your overthinking is making me overthink. I will not threaten to cancel my subscription; that's too overused. I will, however, continue to buy

GAS PAINS

I know where West Virginia is, but what is a gas-station attendant?
—Gill Riley
Key Largo, FL
The person selling lotto tickets—Ed.



Prevagen. You know, it's made from an ingredient originally found in jellyfish (to which Ed. will retort, "And everyone knows a jellyfish never forgets a spider graph"). Seriously, you should go after the Prevagen account. Could be your biggest advertiser.
—Peter
Summit, NJ

Kudos to VanderWerp for the article on ride quality! One quibble (you saw that coming, didn't you?): There are indeed quantitative ride measures that auto manufacturers use to rank and benchmark their designs. MIL-STD-810 and ISO 2631-1 both describe techniques for measurement and human-body vibration limits. The military is well aware that vibration, including ride frequencies, takes a toll on operator focus, stamina, and performance, so new vehicles are required to meet certain benchmarks before acceptance. Anyway, it was great to see objective test results for a wide range of vehicles instead of simply qualitative descriptions. Keep up the good work!
—Greg Wheeler
Star, ID

IN PRINT

Tony Quiroga was right when he said that we love to point out errors, we don't like EVs, and we want to see more affordable vehicles tested [January/February 2025]. But what he forgot to say was that, more than anything else, we love to have our letters printed (hint, hint)! How did he miss that?
—Peter Casimir
McKinney, TX
Come and get your love—Ed.

Tony, that's one of the best letters from the editor I've read in the many years I've been a subscriber. This is my first letter to this mag. I've always enjoyed your writing for almost all of those years. I'm really satisfied to watch your transition to your role as editor-in-chief.
—Perry Deyarmond
San Antonio, TX
Quiroga, can you ask your mom to stop writing in?—Ed.

ODD COUPLE

I remember the Mazda MX-3 ["The Best Odds," January/February 2025]. In fact, I almost bought one . . . until the seat squeezed my ass to a point. If it weren't for that, I'd have bought the MX-3. It was ahead of its time.
—Rick Perrotta
Erie, PA
Are you sure you sat on the MX-3's seat, Perrotta? Something tells me you sat on something else—Ed.

The final page of your magazine has taken many forms over the last 30 years—I think Pippa Garner did some hallucinogenic illustrations for the Last Page for a while—but John Phillips's reflections on old cars is by far my favorite. He always had unconventional opinions on seemingly unassuming cars. Glad to see he still does.
—Colin Haneman
Conshohocken, PA

SIX EASY PIECES

Looking at the pics of Porsche's new engine on page 22 ["Six Education," January/February 2025]: Will it be named the Wankel II?
—Steve Connelly
Decatur, IL

WIND TALKER

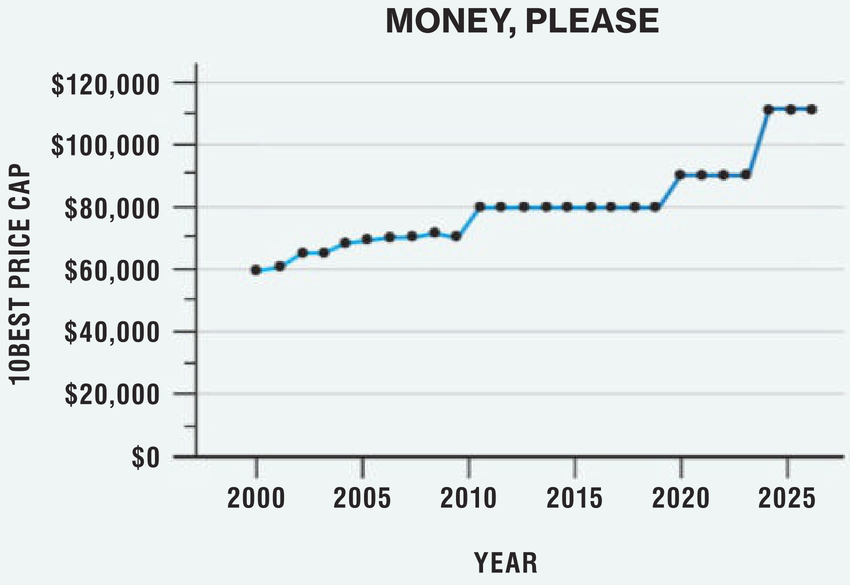
Hats off to Porsche and Francesca Cogotti for demolishing gender and nationality stereotypes ["Wind-Tunnel Visionary," January/February 2025]! First, to Ms. Cogotti, for demonstrating technical and scientific excellence in aerodynamics, a traditionally male-dominated field. Then to Porsche, for hiring the best talent needed to keep its vehicles on the cutting edge.
—John Stanton
Austin, TX

TAKE THE WHEEL

I think if David E. Davis and John Phillips had a baby (sorry for the image), it would be Elana Scherr. Please tell her I recommend *The Murderbot Diaries* if she hasn't already devoured them.
—Marc Ramer
Los Angeles, CA

THE EDITORS EXPLAIN

I just read that your 10Best price cap is $110,000 [January/February 2025]. I know you have a formula for calculating that. I would be very interested in seeing a graph (please, not a spider graph) of how that price limit has changed over, say, 20 years. Car prices are getting bank-account-drainingly high. Part of it is regulations, part of it is inflation, and part of it is standard-equipment creep (does every car need seat warmers?).
—Sheldon Townsend
Moses Lake, WA



For many years, our formula for calculating 10Best's upper limit was 2.5 times the average new-car transaction price, but we've recently diverged from that because it seemed too high and inclusive. The old calculation would have raised the 2025 cap to $120,000, rather than $110,000. In the past 25 years, the prices of two 10Best mainstays, the Honda Accord and the Porsche Boxster, are up by 86 and 81 percent. Applying the same increase to our cap puts it right around $110,000. Looking at the increase from the perspective of inflation shows that while today's vehicle prices may seem to be steep and getting out of hand, our $61,000 cap in 2000 equates to over $115,000 today, according to the Consumer Price Index. *—Dave VanderWerp*

BACKFIRES

THE TURBO DOG

An auto-magazine writer, writing about how it might be hard to afford a Porsche 911, said there might be an alternative, but he said, "Think of a group of islands known as a tax haven." What car could he be referring to? ChatGPT: "The writer is likely referring to the Cayman, a mid-engine sports car by Porsche. The name alludes to the Cayman Islands, which are indeed considered a tax haven. The Porsche Cayman is often seen as a more affordable alternative to the iconic Porsche 911 while still delivering a thrilling driving experience."
—Dave M
Plymouth, MN

What does AI think of the Lincoln Nautilus?—Ed.

WELCOME to the CAYMAN ISLANDS
TAX

I bought a 1987 Porsche 911 in the mid-'90s, having previously owned and driven front-engine, rear-wheel-drive vehicles. I signed up for the Porsche Club of America's driving school as soon as it became available. It was a lifesaving decision. With all the previous vehicles I had driven, if you got scared driving a little too fast into a curve, you let up on the gas. Doing that in a Porsche 911 can get you killed. If you let up on the gas going into a curve driving a 911, you will go into a spin and get at least a 360-degree view of everything around you. Ezra Dyer didn't mention that in his Porsche article.
—Richard Jacobs
Dayton, VA

END RUNS

I was surprised at how many anti-EV letters there were in Backfires [January/February 2025]. Would I buy an EV now? No, because the technology, particularly the battery, is changing so quickly. Buying an EV now is akin to buying a home computer circa 1990 in that you know there will be a faster, less expensive model coming out within a year or less. Despite that, I think it's important for *C/D* to continue to evaluate EVs as their sales continue to increase.
—Ken Hemmerling
Edmonton, AB

Seeing all the negative feedback about the EV issue, I would like to remind the esteemed editors that in any form of feedback, the negative often predominates, while those with positive feedback tend to remain silent. I, for one, appreciate your EV coverage. Perhaps you should consider eliminating the special issue and spreading out your EV coverage over the year and treat EVs as regular cars.
—Harry Haddon
Lancaster, PA

Is Ed.'s middle name Siri?
—Raymond Hicks
Wickenburg, AZ

Do people not know that "Ed." stands for "Editor"? Or is the joke on me that it doesn't?
—Josh Eldridge
Thousand Oaks, CA

I'm consistently disappointed about what people know—Ed. ■

CAR AND DRIVER

Editor-in-Chief Tony Quiroga

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Published by HEARST 300 W. 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
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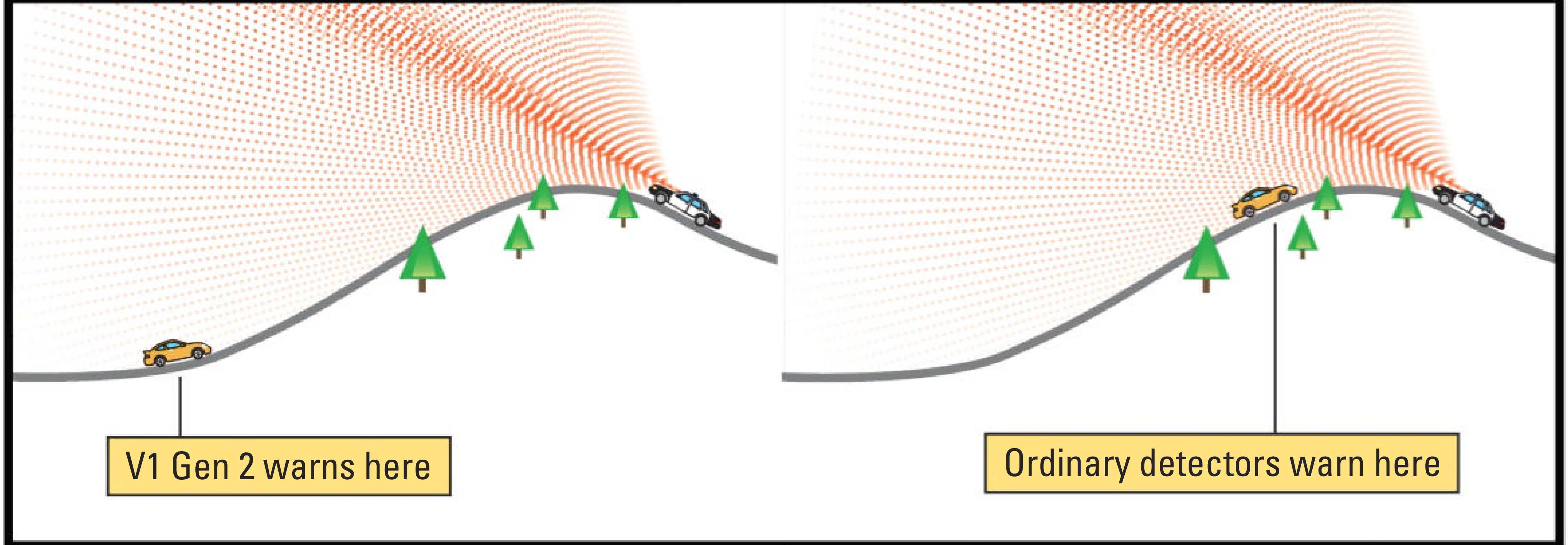

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STILL MADE IN CINCINNATI

UPFRONT

_HONORABLY DISCHARGED _SENNA ART _STORAGE WARS

Spanish Crusade

Once a subbrand of Seat, upstart Cupra plans to bring a bit of Catalonian flair to the U.S. by the end of the decade.

_by Greg Fink

OF THE EIGHT AUTOMOTIVE brands under the Volkswagen Group umbrella, only Cupra has managed continuous global sales growth over the past six years. Once a performance subbrand of Spanish automaker Seat (pronounced *SAY-aht*), Cupra became its own marque for 2018 with the arrival of the Ateca, a performance-oriented sibling of the Seat Ateca compact SUV. Cupra sales in 2018 totaled a rather unremarkable 14,400 units, or roughly one-fifth the number of Seat Atecas sold.

As Cupra's lineup grew, so did its sales. Though the Cupra Leon followed the blueprint of its Ateca stablemate in being a more dynamically

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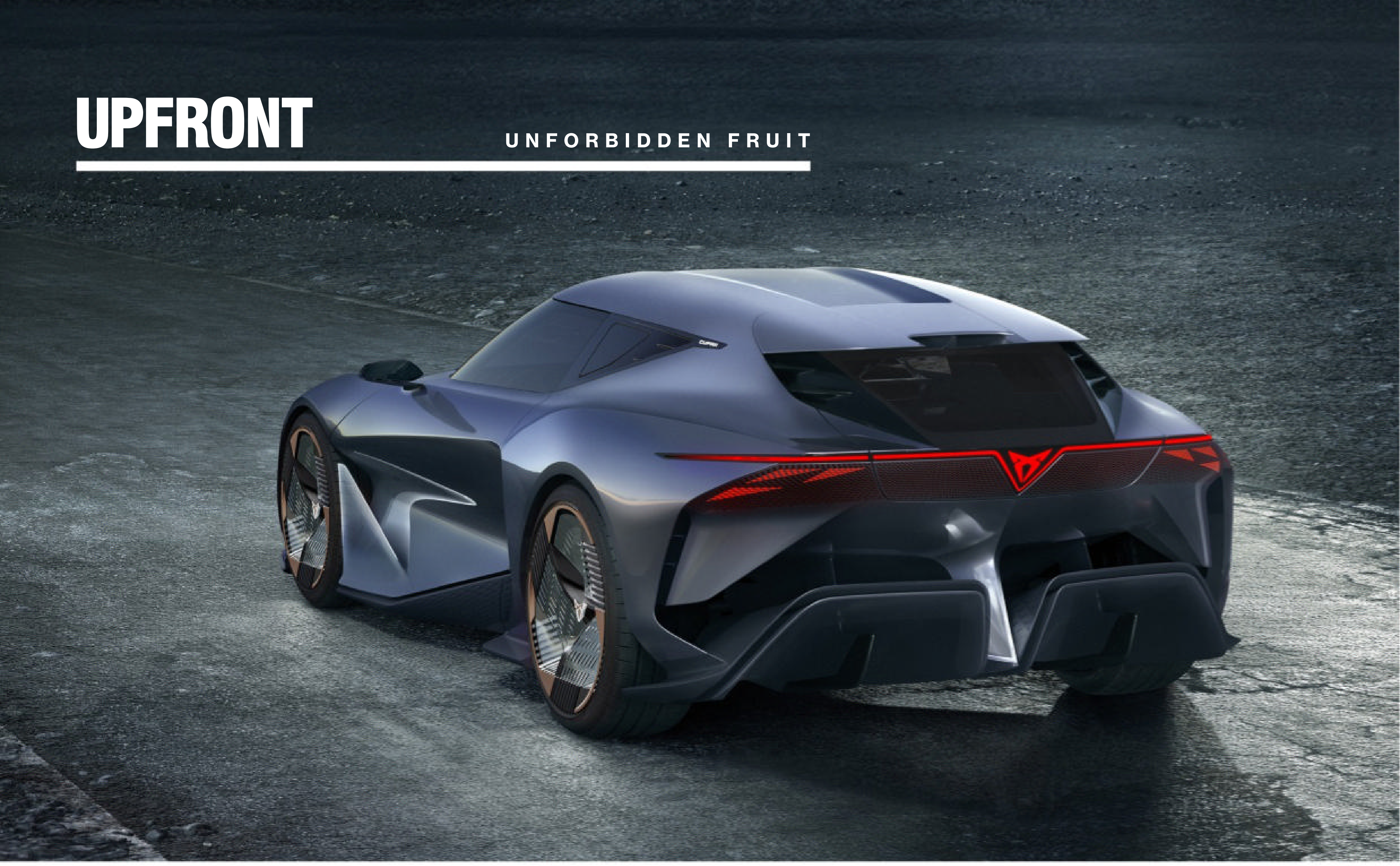


capable variant of a Seat model bearing an identical nameplate, Cupra—a name derived from "Cup racing"—soon differentiated itself from Seat with the addition of the Formentor, a small SUV with no Seat counterpart. The battery-electric Born and Tavascan, as well as the Terramar compact SUV, soon followed, netting the nascent brand a total of four distinct models in what is now a seven-car lineup and helping it move a record 248,100 units in 2024—more than 17 times what it sold just six years earlier.

Cupra CEO Wayne Griffiths says the electric Dark Rebel concept is "the perfect sports car" for the brand.

"I often get asked, 'Why is Cupra such a success compared to other [young] brands?'" says Wayne Griffiths, CEO of Cupra. "One of the reasons is that we hit the ground running. We had factories, and we had a dealer network."

Whereas other newer automakers, such as Rivian and Lucid, had to find or build a factory and create a sales network, Cupra's close connection with Seat and its place in the Volkswagen Group allowed it to use corporate infrastructure to build and sell vehicles in Europe, Australia, and Mexico. In launching Cupra's U.S. operations, Griffiths is drawing from the same playbook that helped the brand succeed abroad. This includes plans to produce Cupras at the VW Group's North American factories and set up a dedicated dealer network here.

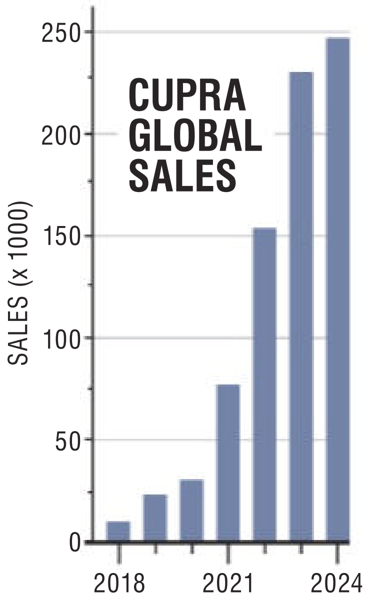
"I think we need to do a bigger SUV, but I also think we probably need to do a full-electric car," Griffiths says about U.S. product plans. "I'd love to make the Dark Rebel, a fully electric sports car. That would be a great car to position the brand." However, bringing a production version of the shooting-brake concept to fruition is not a current priority for the brand, which aims to bridge the gap between Volkswagen and Audi by emphasizing dramatic designs and an athletic pretense at a price point that reflects its place between mainstream and luxury. Sights are set on vehicles with volume potential.

To achieve its high-volume goal, Cupra intends to use a traditional dealership model, avoiding the direct-sales method of other young brands, including corporate cousin Scout. Cupra aims to launch in select East Coast, West Coast, and Sunbelt states by the end of the decade and have a two-vehicle lineup in place within a year of entering the market. If all goes according to Cupra's plan, it would see annual U.S. sales of around 100,000 units just a few years later.

"The strategy has to be nailed right from the get-go," says Robby DeGraff, manager of product and consumer insights at AutoPacific. "Especially for a brand with likely little to no brand awareness or recognition."

But Cupra will need more than just good products to establish itself in the U.S. "You have to bring your checkbook to succeed in America," says Tyson Jominy, vice president of data and analytics at J.D. Power. "Certainly, being part of the Volkswagen Group means Cupra will have access to all its resources—and the learnings the company has about selling cars in this country."

Even with the financial backing and strategy know-how that Cupra can glean from its corporate overlord, the Spanish brand still faces major headwinds in its bid to win over stateside consumers. "The fact we were able to make it in Europe doesn't mean we're going to make it in the U.S.," Griffiths says.



Cupra Calling

The Spanish brand's U.S. lineup may include one or more of these vehicles.

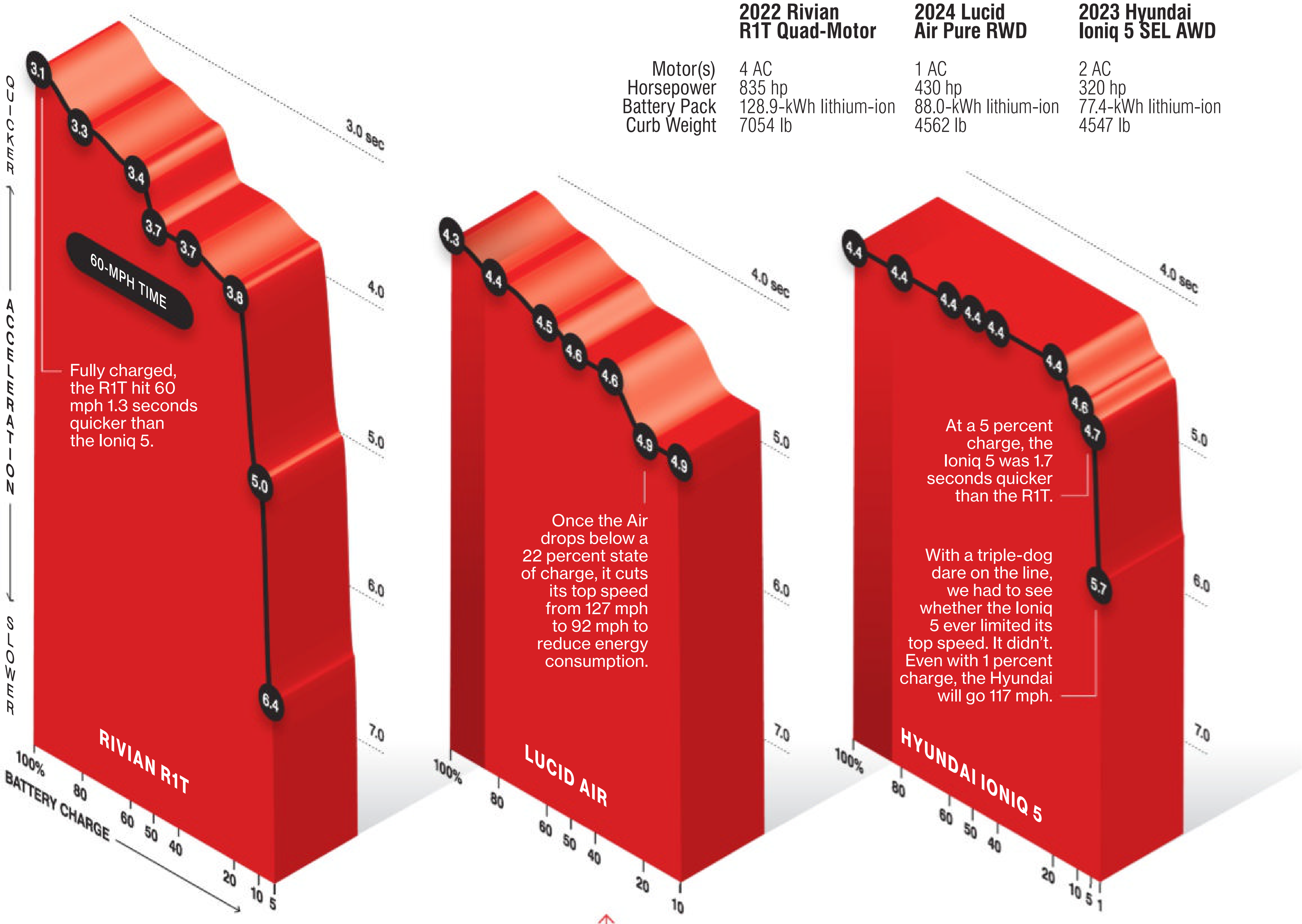
Of the models in Cupra's current lineup, the **Terramar** SUV and the **Tavascan** EV are best suited for the U.S. market. The brand assembles the former alongside the Audi Q3 in Györ, Hungary. Like the 2025 Volkswagen Tiguan built in Puebla, Mexico, the approximately $46,000 Terramar employs the VW Group's MQB Evo underpinnings. A trio of turbo four-cylinder powertrains is available, one of which is a plug-in hybrid.

The roughly $55,000 Tavascan shares its MEB platform with the Volkswagen ID.4 built in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is available in 282-hp single-motor and 335-hp dual-motor forms.

If Cupra builds a new larger SUV in North America, it could potentially use the PPC platform of the latest Puebla-built Audi Q5 or the MQB Evo platform expected to underpin the next-gen version of the Chattanooga-built VW Atlas.

The Terramar (center) is the latest addition to Cupra's model line, which also includes (from left) the Formentor, the Leon hatch and wagon, the Ateca, the Born, and the Tavascan.

	2022 Rivian R1T Quad-Motor	2024 Lucid Air Pure RWD	2023 Hyundai Ioniq 5 SEL AWD
Motor(s)	4 AC	1 AC	2 AC
Horsepower	835 hp	430 hp	320 hp
Battery Pack	128.9-kWh lithium-ion	88.0-kWh lithium-ion	77.4-kWh lithium-ion
Curb Weight	7054 lb	4562 lb	4547 lb



Fully charged, the R1T hit 60 mph 1.3 seconds quicker than the Ioniq 5.

Once the Air drops below a 22 percent state of charge, it cuts its top speed from 127 mph to 92 mph to reduce energy consumption.

At a 5 percent charge, the Ioniq 5 was 1.7 seconds quicker than the R1T.

With a triple-dog dare on the line, we had to see whether the Ioniq 5 ever limited its top speed. It didn't. Even with 1 percent charge, the Hyundai will go 117 mph.

POWER CLIFF
BATTERY STATE OF CHARGE AND ITS EFFECTS ON EV ACCELERATION.

The Balance of Power

Just how much does an EV's state of charge affect straight-line performance? We took three of our long-term battery-powered vehicles to the track to find out.

_by Austin Irwin

PRETEND FOR A MOMENT you're testing a 668-hp Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing with a full 17.4-gallon tank of gas. As you do more and more acceleration runs, fuel burns off, making the car lighter and thus slightly quicker. An EV, however, doesn't lose weight as it consumes energy.

Electric cars' acceleration times increase as the battery's state of charge (SOC) drops. But some OEMs are better than others at managing this performance slip, so we decided to take three EVs to the track and clock their 60-mph times with a fully charged pack, with 10 percent charge, and at several increments in between. The acceleration degradation we measured isn't necessarily representative of all EVs, but it provides a good picture of how 60-mph times increase as the battery discharges.

The test revealed that the 430-hp Lucid Air and the 835-hp Rivian R1T start losing performance immediately. But the Hyundai Ioniq 5 remains consistent until its SOC drops below 20 percent. The Hyundai has a few things working for it. First, making 320 horses generates a fraction of the heat that 835 does, so the battery isn't fighting excessive power-robbing temperatures immediately. Plus, the battery can make 365 horsepower, but the 5's motors request 320 at most, resulting in an EV that can deliver its maximum thrust over the widest SOC range we've measured.

INFOGRAPHIC BY NICOLAS RAPP

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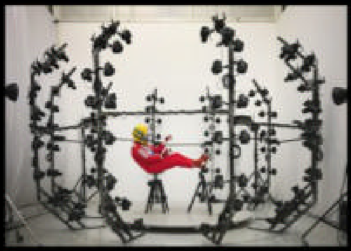
Wizardry of Oz

Artist Paul Oz combines racing imaging, 3-D printing, and ancient casting techniques to make sculptures of legendary racers.

_by Elana Scherr

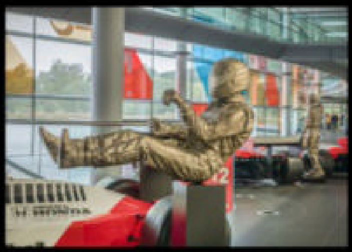
PAUL OZ'S TEACHERS said he was no good at art, so he studied engineering instead. But he kept painting as a hobby, and in 2008, at almost 30 years old, Oz finally started showing his work publicly. Shortly thereafter, his lively canvases celebrating Formula 1 cars and drivers caught the attention of F1 teams. Not content to limit his talents to two dimensions, Oz began working in sculpture in 2012. Using traditional foundry techniques, as well as 3-D scanning and printing technology, Oz creates realistic sculptures in bronze, such as *Senna "Eau Rouge,"* the statue of Ayrton Senna he debuted in 2019. Recently, Oz used magnesium sourced from the wheels of McLaren's F1 cars to cast *Senna "La Rascasse"* (below). Here's how.

MAKING THE MOLD



Donning a replica of a suit worn by Senna, Oz spent several ab-burning minutes in the crunch of an F1 driving position as cameras took hundreds of images of him from different angles. A 3-D scan was created by combining these 2-D images.

The digital model was then 3-D printed and resurfaced in clay, at which point Oz finalized the details of the sculpture. He then formed the clay model in wax, creating a mold into which he poured the molten bronze.

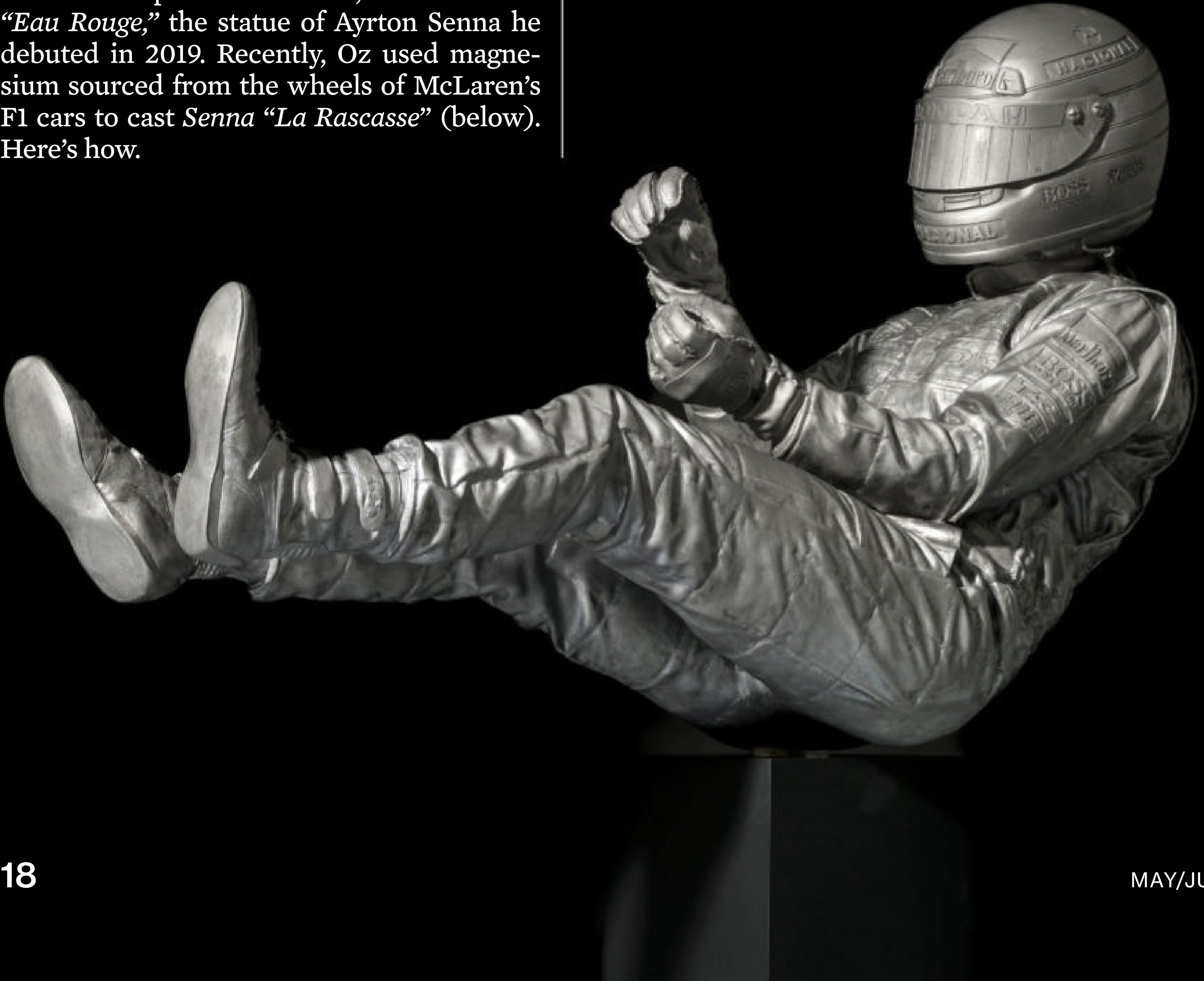


Oz made several copies of the sculpture in different sizes. Today one sits permanently in the McLaren headquarters in Woking, England.

Following the success of the bronze *Senna "Eau Rouge,"* Oz decided to try making a version out of magnesium sourced from wheels McLaren used on its F1 cars.

While most of the process was the same, magnesium is a much more volatile material than bronze—as Oz found out during casting, when a bad seal in the vacuum cabinet spontaneously combusted, creating a fire so hot that two wheels' worth of magnesium dribbled out onto the foundry floor. "We had to evacuate the foundry," he says.

Attempt number two went off without a hitch, and Oz unveiled the finished *Senna "La Rascasse"* at the 2024 Las Vegas Grand Prix.



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Throughout the journey, we're also making pit stops at noteworthy automotive sites. Colorado Climb is packed with scenic drives, exciting activities, and exclusive access sure to please any enthusiast.

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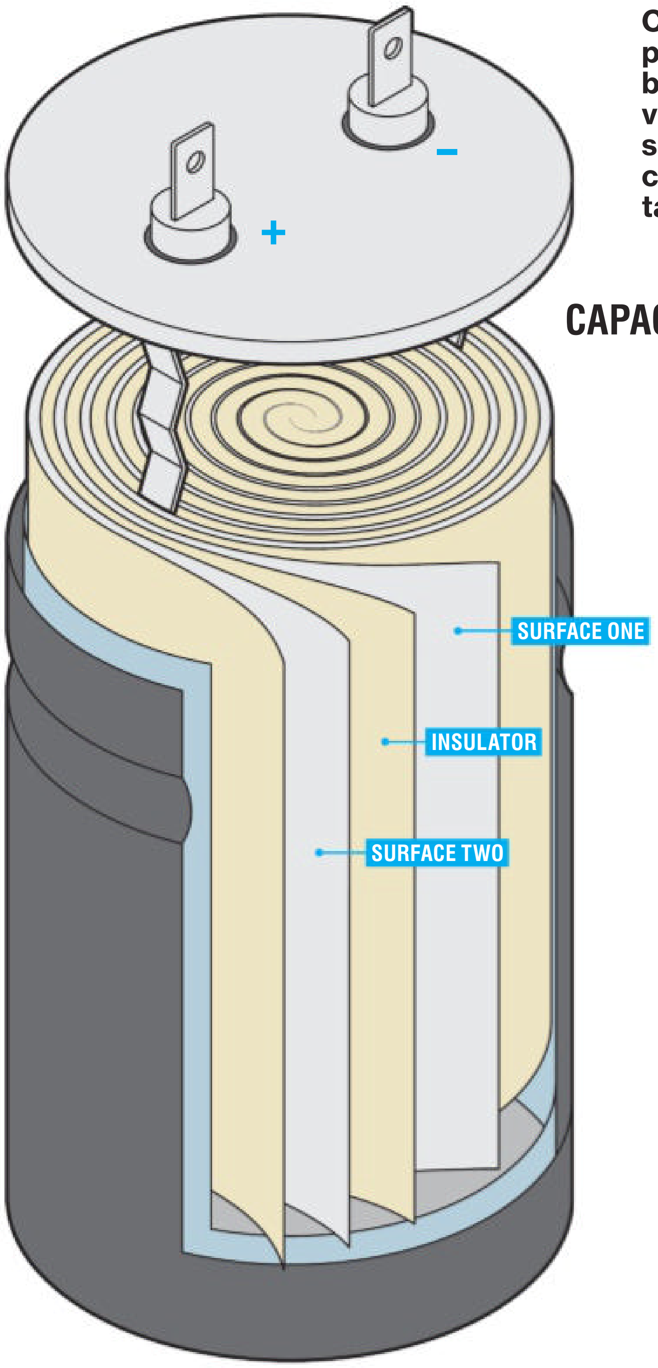
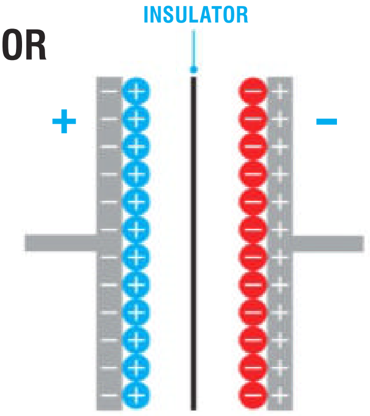


Capacitors consist of a pair of surfaces separated by an insulator. When a voltage is applied, one surface takes on a positive charge while the other takes on a negative one.

CAPACITOR



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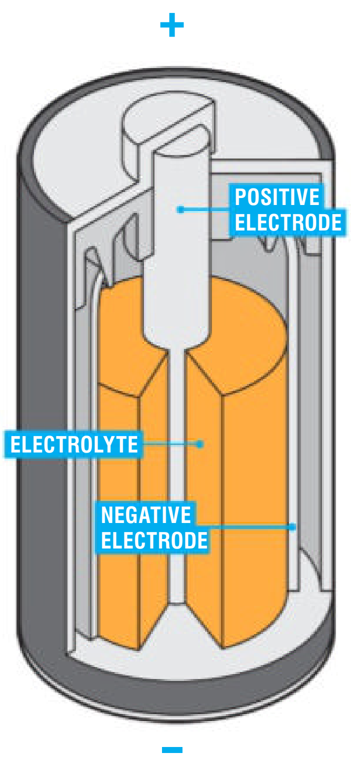

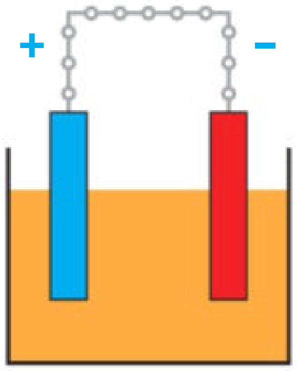

Batteries use an electrolyte to move electrons between two electrodes (positive and negative) to release energy.

Limited Capacitor

Despite their many strengths, capacitors have weaknesses that limit their viability as a real alternative to the large-capacity battery packs in modern EVs.

_by Csaba Csere

AS GOOD AS THE BATTERIES of modern electric vehicles are, they still have drawbacks, such as their physical size and heft. Though the cost of EV batteries continues to fall, they remain pricey pieces with a limited working life span. So, why not ditch the bulky battery pack for a capacitor, a simpler electrical storage option that has a long life and is capable of releasing energy almost instantly?

Capacitors are common in all manner of electrical circuits. Unlike a battery, which is essentially a chemical device consisting of two electrodes in some sort of electrolyte that allows electrons to flow from one of the electrodes to the other to release energy, a capacitor stores energy by accumulating positive and negative electrical charges on a pair of surfaces separated by an insulator. Capacitors come in a variety of shapes and sizes, though they are typically rather small.

In recent years, some automakers have employed this sort of energy storage device—Mazda, with its i-ELOOP kinetic-energy-recovery system, and Lamborghini, in the limited-run Sián FKP 37 and Sián roadster. However, no EV models use this tech.

The reason for this is a capacitor's lower energy density. Whereas a 100-kWh lithium-ion battery might weigh around 1200 pounds, a capacitor with a similar capacity would hit the scales at roughly 10 times that weight. One way to reduce this mass is to increase the operating voltage, since the energy storage of a capacitor goes up with the square of voltage. But high-voltage capacitors are harder to manufacture, and nobody wants several thousand volts coursing through a car's electrical system.

Moreover, the voltage of a capacitor decreases with energy usage—by about 30 percent when the capacitor is half depleted and by nearly 70 percent when it is 90 percent drained. Accommodating this discrepancy requires more complex power electronics that can transform a capacitor's varying voltage into the constant voltage an electric motor needs to maintain consistent performance. Plus, when left alone, capacitors discharge faster than batteries. Even an optimized supercapacitor loses substantial energy by the week.

On the other hand, a capacitor charges very rapidly. For instance, fully charging a depleted 100-kWh capacitor could take as little as one minute. However, doing so would use 6000 kilowatts of electricity, equivalent to the power draw of roughly 3500 homes (for that minute). Installing a second capacitor at a charging station would serve as a more practical setup. That would allow the station's capacitor to charge gradually and then dump its energy into an EV's capacitor by way of a very heavy-duty coupling or a wireless connection.

These foibles make it difficult to imagine a capacitor-powered EV coming to fruition anytime soon. Still, as Mazda and Lamborghini prove, there is room for automakers to take advantage of the benefits of a capacitor. We wager that others will follow suit and employ this technology in specific applications where a capacitor's strengths outweigh its weaknesses.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PHILPOT

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EZRA DYER

COLUMNIST

Drive a Subaru WRX often enough, and it gets into your blood. From there, it's not a long trip to your driveway.

SUBARUS AND I GO WAY BACK. I learned how to drive at age 11 on a GL wagon in the woods in Maine. Later, I built my own rally course out there and borrowed a cast-off *Fast & Furious* WRX STI to relive my childhood (but better). I've ridden with rally god Petter Solberg in Spain and driven the current WRX TR on the Targa Florio roads in Sicily. So, perhaps the 2024 WRX Premium that's now in my driveway was preordained. When I signed the papers at the dealership, I told my wife, "I guess this is my midlife-crisis car." She replied, "Oh, I wouldn't say that. You're probably past midlife." Honey, put down the actuarial tables and help me bolt on this cold-air intake.

The WRX has always been a flaming bag of poop on the doorstep of civilized automotive society, and the current one, introduced for 2022, continues in that tradition. Slamming the door no longer sounds like a steel-drum concert, but the WRX still doesn't take itself too seriously. It's got a hood scoop, bulging fenders, and a manual hand brake. And nearly every WRX we saw on the dealer's lot had a manual transmission. On cold starts, it sounds like the mufflers fell off (yes, there are two, leading to quad tips). Granted, the redline is lower than it used to be, and there's no STI model, but the WRX still knows how to have fun. Instead of viewing it as a lesser STI, think of it as a Volkswagen GTI with a parole officer.

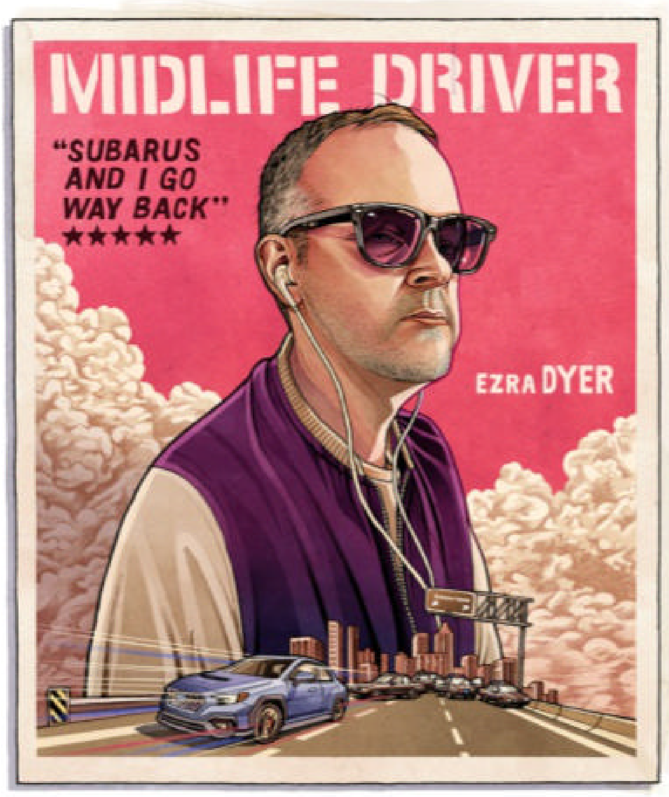


ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT

On new cars, I am normally loath to mess with OEM hardware—my Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid's interior looks like Eddie Murphy's suit from *Delirious*, but it came that way from the factory. Nonetheless, about two days into WRX ownership, I was elbow-deep in the Subaru's engine bay, installing the aftermarket intake, which makes every upshift sound like Optimus Prime snoring into a floor fan. I can feel the brim of my hat getting flatter with each fluttery whoosh of the wastegate.

Next, I bought a set of winter wheels and tires. Then, when I'd mounted only the fronts, I took a photo to troll a WRX Facebook group: "I figured I'd be smart before the snow gets here and get some Bridgestone Blizzaks. Gonna see how these work on the front, and then maybe I'll get two more for the back."

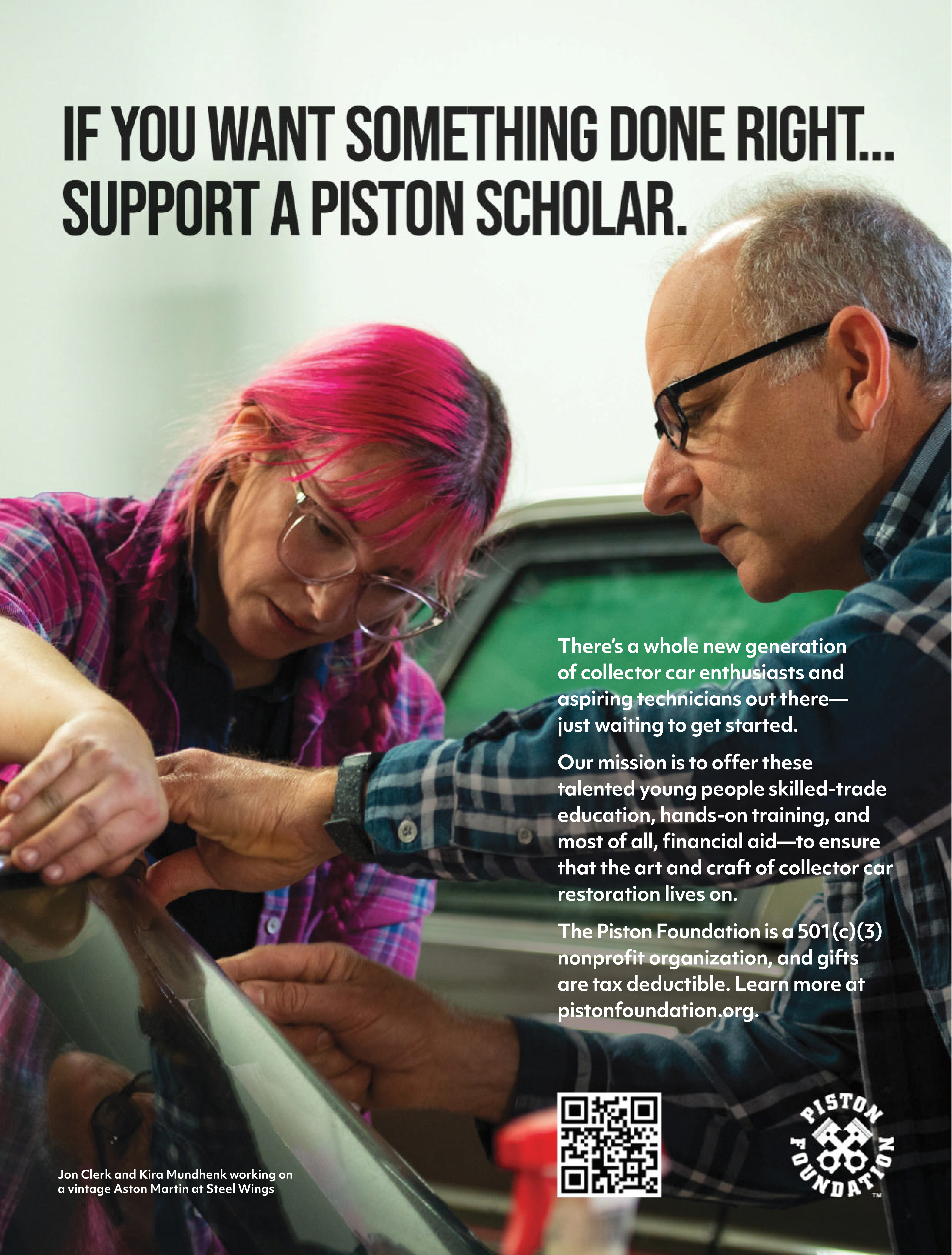
I don't know what's wrong with me—I crave acceptance, yet I'm compelled to act in ways that invite furious scorn. Which means the WRX is the perfect car for me, simultaneously responsible and immature. If the WRX had a frontal lobe, it would be about 85 percent developed.

On the grown-up side of the ledger, the WRX has a four-cylinder engine that gets decent fuel economy. It's a good value, and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety named it a Top Safety Pick. Sure-footed all-wheel drive is standard. The trunk is plenty big. The general public sees a practical little sedan, and that assessment is not inaccurate.

But WRX owners look at the VB, as they call it, and see a blank canvas for automotive debauchery. Go watch the first six minutes of *Baby Driver* (just look up "red WRX car chase"), and you'll understand the mentality. Not every WRX gets used as a getaway car, but any of them could be on any given day. The first time I took mine to a snowy parking lot, I found you can rip donuts with the stability control on—I'd yet to learn the two-step process for turning it off. But at some point, the car seems to say, "Okay, guess we're doing this," and pivots around the inside front tire like it's auditioning for the next *Gymkhana* video. I can't wait to find out what happens when I actually turn the system fully off.

The WRX's dirty little secret is that it's not that quick in a straight line, with a 2022 model we tested requiring a brutal redline clutch dump to hit 60 mph in just 5.5 seconds. It's all chassis, this one—0.95 g on the skidpad and better braking performance than a BMW M3—but it's no threat to the Honda Civic Type R or the Toyota GR Corolla under the hood. But here again, Subaru made a shrewd call: You can drive your WRX and enjoy it until the warranty expires, at which point you can throw a tune on it and have an easy 350 horsepower. Or you can just void the warranty—YOLO, LOL. This is a surprisingly popular move in a community that views the *Nitro Circus* crew as life coaches.

Personally, I'm going to wait awhile to do that. Hey, nobody ever said a midlife crisis had to be quick.



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Jon Clerk and Kira Mundhenk working on a vintage Aston Martin at Steel Wings

ELANA SCHERR

COLUMNIST

The saddest story in the world can be told in just six words—or 13 miles. I call it "The Auction-House Blues."

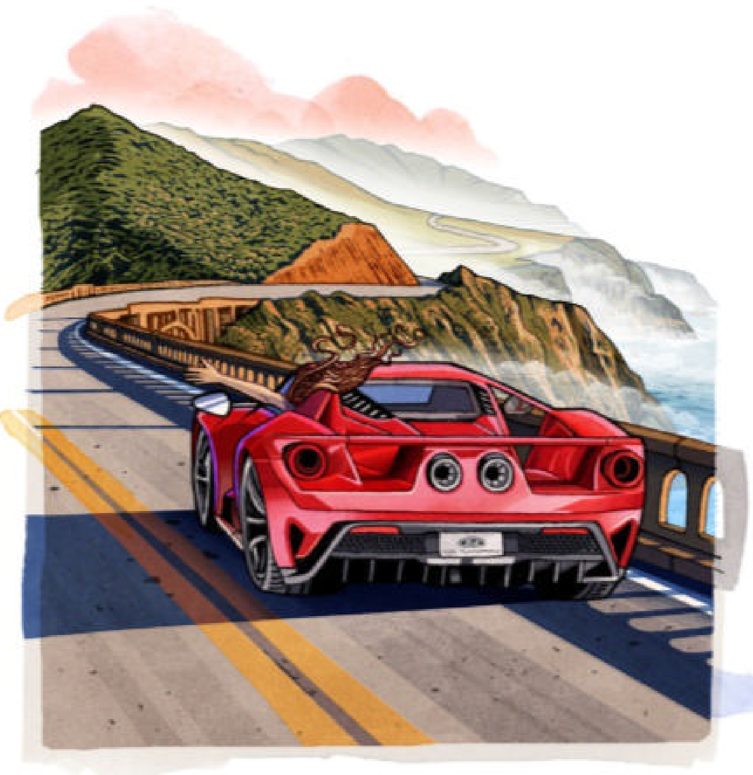

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT

HEMINGWAY DIDN'T WRITE the world's saddest short story, although he's often credited with it. "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." I can see pathos in the tale, but I don't think it has to read as sad. It's possible the baby just had big feet and the shoes didn't fit. Maybe the in-laws bought the shoes and they have terrible taste. There are all kinds of reasons why new parents might have an excess of infant footwear. Babies don't even really need shoes. If you want a poignant sentence, try "At auction: sports car, low miles." I'm tearing up just thinking about it. Is there anything sadder than a good car, undriven?

I don't mean everything needs to come to the auction block with worn-smooth pedals and a rolled-over odometer. I'd be the first person to jump on a nice classic with, say, 60,000 miles or recommend a modern collectible that has yet to reach its dirty thirties, but when I see a 2022 Ford GT up for auction with 13 miles on it, I get the blues. Heck, I've driven a Ford GT more than 13 miles, and I've never even owned one. Those were memorable miles too, with the ocean mist of Big Sur whirling through the windows in the car's flying-buttress roofline and the breathy turbo whistle ping-ponging off the cliff walls. If I hadn't had to return the hotel pillow I stole so I could fit in the nonadjustable seat, I would have kept going till I ran out of gas or the Ford handlers caught up to me. The owner of this 13-mile car missed out on a good driving machine. If an unused supercar isn't tragic enough for you, how about a 2001 Chevrolet Corvette Z06 that sold at auction in January with just 29 miles? That's barely more than a mile per year of its life. It never left the garage. That's not a sports car; it's a veal calf.

Even if you subscribe to the idea of buying a car as an investment and getting every dollar out of it upon resale, that Z06 went for $47,300, and a quick search of Vette sales shows similar models going for $35,000–$45,000 with 250 times the mileage. Those owners had some fun and are still poised to make most of their purchase price back now that the time has come to move on.

Some cars are vastly more valuable as a result of their low miles, but those are rarities—backup chassis for competition models that were never raced and are only now coming up for sale, or those occasional never-registered '60s Impalas from forgotten dealerships that are finally liquidating. Even though nobody purposely bought those cars to not drive them, they can still bring low-mileage sorrows to the winning bidders, for two reasons. One, machines deteriorate while they sleep, and two, if your hook for paying top dollar was a car's as-new status, every mile you add after that is just depreciation.

"When it comes to actually using something, low mileage is an albatross around your neck," says Jim Pickering, an automotive market analyst and author of several books on classic-car restoration. "You can't drive it, because all the seals are going to be dried out. Injectors will be gummed up. Fuel tanks will be full of varnish. You can't restore them, because the value is in the originality. People tend to think about cars as investments in the same category as stocks or bonds. And they miss the point that you're supposed to be able to take these things out and enjoy them."

Even though Pickering believes cars are best used for their intended purpose, he points out that I'm being unfair to claim that nondriving owners and investors get no joy from them. There are automotive spaces for cars that haven't spent time on the road. A car like the low-mile Z06 might be eligible for competition in events like Bloomington Gold, where its Goodyear Eagle F1 SuperCar tires still whiskered by vent spews would inspire awe and jealousy in attendees. People like cars in different ways, he reminds me. Some owners just like the thrill of buying and selling, or find more pleasure in the having than the driving. "If your enjoyment is having it in your garage, and everybody comes over and looks at it, there's nothing wrong with that," he says.

And, of course, Pickering is right. It's good for the hobby to have a few original examples for future restorers to check paint markings on, but we only need a few. The rest should be out in the world finding the twistiest of roads and wearing not just the whiskers but also all the tread off their original tires. The best cars have been places. Take your car out, and let it run free.

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TAN
UP IN

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Can the old-school Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing stand up against the modern Audi RS7 Performance and the plug-in-hybrid BMW M5?

BY ANDREW KROK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC URBANO

BLUE

AUDI RS7 PERFORMANCE
Highs: Effortless hustle, hatchback versatility, svelte inside and out.
Lows: Touchy brakes, park-bench seat discomfort, brittle at low speeds.
Verdict: An all-wheel-drive motorpsycho dream.

IN 1966, AT THE FREE TRADE HALL in Manchester, England, Bob Dylan played a two-set show. He started with his older folk tunes, on which he'd first risen to fame, and the reception was warm. Set two, however, was Dylan's new stuff, richly layered electric compositions—and the heckling began. At one point, a voice from the crowd cried out, "Judas!" Unfazed, Dylan leaned into the mic and sneered, "I don't believe you," and then thrust the audience headlong into the electrified bombast of the now-legendary "Like a Rolling Stone."

If the Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing were a Dylan album, it'd be his 1962 eponymous debut. Both the car and the LP are reverently old-school. The Caddy holds true to the traditional roots of the supersedan, with a massive pushrod V-8 out front and two driven wheels in the back. It feels like history, almost as if it's on loan from a museum.

The Audi RS7 Performance exists somewhere between the tried-and-true and what lies ahead, like *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. The RS7 stands as a sort of status quo, as many contemporary sporting machines rock the combination

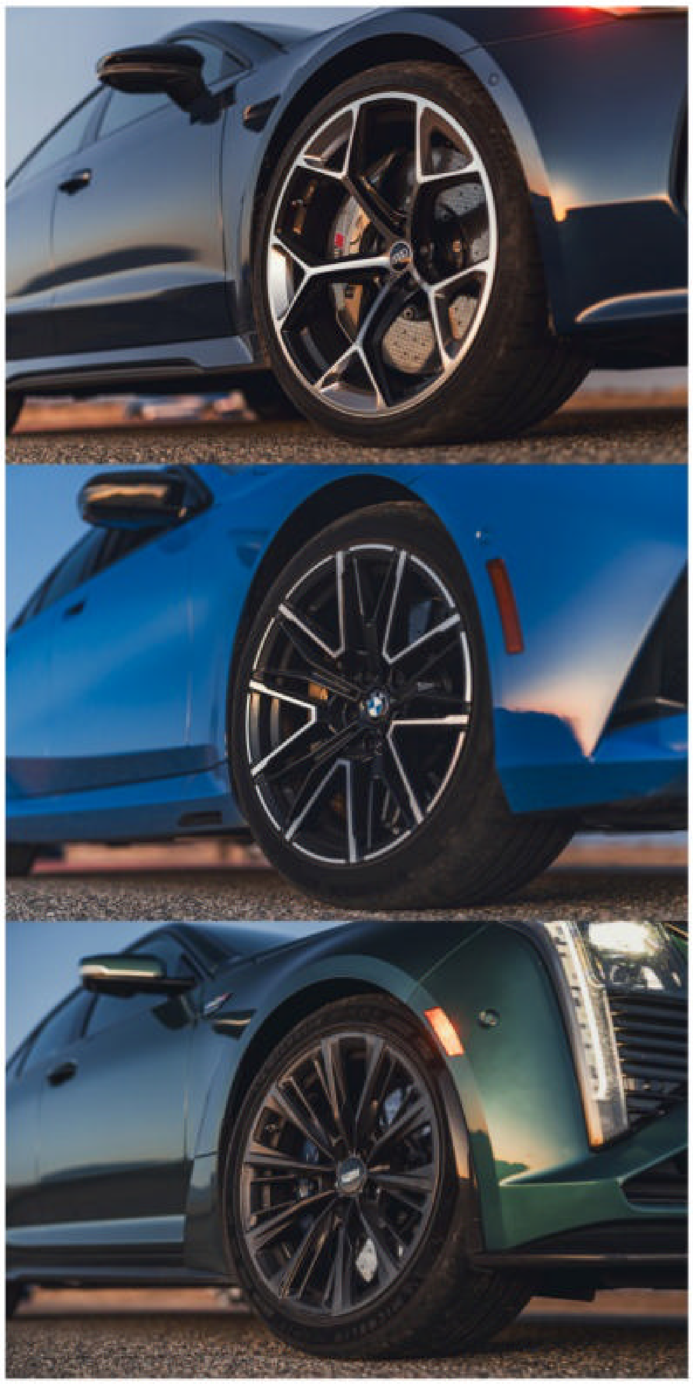
CADILLAC CT5-V BLACKWING WITH PRECISION PACKAGE
Highs: Brilliant handling, V-8 sound we never tire of, solid value.
Lows: Chugs like a frat boy, least comfortable back seat, gets loose everywhere.
Verdict: Classics endure for a reason.

BMW M5
Highs: Physics-defying speed, added e-motivation, no concessions to economy.
Lows: Overwhelming looks, overwhelming tech, overwhelming mass.
Verdict: Heralds of the future don't necessarily earn the warmest welcome.

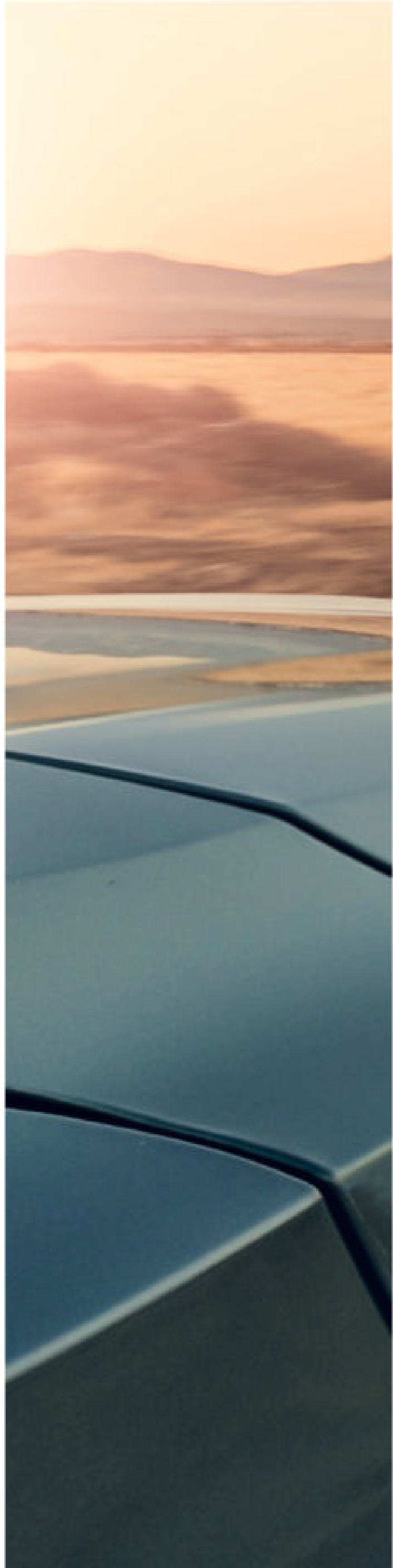
of a twin-turbocharged gas engine and standard all-wheel drive. What you see is what you get—no surprises here, just some solid folk music reflecting modern beliefs.

The BMW M5, on the other hand, is a Stratocaster plugged into a wall of Marshall amps, a literal and metaphorical shock to the system. It's the one-two punch of *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*, which put electrification front and center in a genre where it didn't exist before—and perhaps where it wasn't wanted. Between its SUV-like curb weight and the addition of e-motivation, this supersedan may as well wear a name tag that says "Mr. Iscariot."

But just like Dylan on that one night in Manchester, the Bimmer hears your wailing protestations and chooses not to stay shackled to the moorings of convention. Will it eventually win over this driving-enthusiast audience? To find out, we headed into the mountains north of Ojai, California.



The Audi, the BMW, and the Cadillac all wear different-size wheels. The RS7's 22-inch wheels (top left) hide a pair of 17.3-inch rotors and 10-piston calipers up front.



Cadillac's $9000 Precision package also requires $9000 in carbon-ceramic brake rotors, but the result looks just like any other CT5-V Blackwing.

074M751
BLACKWING

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

The M5 has always been larger than life, and the new one is also much larger than its competitors. This big blue Bimmer is almost five inches longer than the Cadillac, and it's roughly three inches taller than either of its comparison-test mates.

Throw in the added complexity and mass of a plug-in-hybrid powertrain with its requisite battery, and it's no surprise that the M5 crushed our scales to the tune of 5251 pounds. The 4830-pound Audi is leaner and meaner, and the 4127-pound Cadillac looks like Kate Moss in 1993 by comparison. Fun fact: The M5's curb weight is higher than the CT5-V's gross vehicle weight rating.

In addition to being the portliest, the M5 also proved the most aesthetically polarizing. Its baleen-like maw of a front fascia has enough open space to house a family of raccoons (or a day's worth of gravel from State Route 33), and its two-tone rear bumper makes the diffuser look extra bulky. The RS7 and the Blackwing are decidedly less busy, though all three of our test models came shellacked with optional visual frippery. The BMW's window sticker called out $3100 in carbon-fiber bits, while the Audi's $3550 Black Optic visual package added larger 22-inch wheels and blacked-out trim. The Cadillac, however, took the cake with two different exterior carbon packages totaling $12,330. Sheesh.

All three cabins are as uniquely styled as their exteriors, for better and for worse. The CT5-V

Our testers found the BMW and the Cadillac the most comfortable, though the Audi's far subtler splashes of blue helped earn it the interior-design award.

Six-foot-two technical editor Dan Edmunds displays the practical advantage of the RS7's hatchback by proving he could sleep in it.

shoehorns its infotainment into a single array of displays atop the dashboard with a few physical buttons beneath. The software looks flashy but isn't difficult to learn. The RS7's cabin feels the airiest, with a gigantic panoramic sunroof and large side glass, and its infotainment system is the easiest to use, but the seats will leave your glutes numb, as they have the padding of a park bench. By contrast, the M5's cabin offers all-day comfort. But its high beltline creates driving-a-bathtub vibes, the ambient lighting has the subtlety of a Times Square billboard, and the infotainment is a hot mess of tiles upon tiles.

The RS7's rear hatch dramatically improves the sedan's practicality, dwarfing the regular ol' trunks in the other two cars. The Cadillac's lower starting price is reflected nowhere more so than the rear seat, which is devoid of modern amenities, save for one USB-C port and a few vents. Meanwhile, passengers in the other cars get ports and climate zones aplenty. We're surprised GM doesn't add a surcharge for shoulder belts.

	2025 Audi RS7 Performance	2025 BMW M5	2025 Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing with Precision Package
Base/As Tested	$131,195/$165,040	$123,275/$146,225	**$117,090/$135,920**
Dimensions			
Wheelbase	115.3 in	118.3 in	116.0 in
Length/Width/Height	197.2/76.8/55.9 in	200.6/77.6/59.4 in	195.9/74.1/56.6 in
Track, F/R	65.7/65.0 in	66.3/65.4 in	63.9/62.8 in
Passenger Volume, F/R	51/44 ft^3	**57/45 ft^3**	54/44 ft^3
Cargo Volume	**25 ft^3**	17 ft^3	12 ft^3

	2025 Audi RS7 Performance	2025 BMW M5	2025 Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing with Precision Package
Powertrain			
Engine	twin-turbocharged DOHC 32-valve V-8 244 in³ (3996 cm³)	twin-turbocharged DOHC 32-valve 4.4-liter V-8, 577 hp, 553 lb-ft + AC motor, 194 hp, 207 lb-ft; 14.8-kWh lithium-ion battery pack, 7.4-kW onboard charger	supercharged pushrod 16-valve V-8 376 in³ (6162 cm³)
Power, hp @ rpm	621 @ 6000	**717** @ 6500	668 @ 6500
Torque, lb-ft @ rpm	627 @ 2300	**738** @ 1800	659 @ 3600
Redline	6750 rpm	7200 rpm	6500 rpm
lb per hp	7.8	7.3	**6.2**
Driveline			
Transmission	8-speed automatic	8-speed automatic	10-speed automatic
Driven Wheels	all	rear/all	rear
Final-Drive Ratio:1	3.20	3.31	2.85
Chassis			
Suspension	**F:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	**F:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	**F:** struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Brakes	**F:** 17.3-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc **R:** 14.6-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc	**F:** 16.5-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc **R:** 15.7-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc	**F:** 15.7-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc **R:** 14.7-in vented, cross-drilled ceramic disc
Stability Control	fully defeatable, competition mode, launch control	fully defeatable, competition mode, launch control	fully defeatable, traction off, competition modes, launch control
Tires	Continental SportContact 7 285/30ZR-22 (101Y) AO	Hankook Ventus S1 Evo Z **F:** HL285/40ZR-20 (111Y) ★ **R:** HL295/35ZR-21 (110Y) ★	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R **F:** 285/35ZR-19 (103Y) MO1 **R:** 305/30ZR-19 (102Y)

These cars seem purpose-built to inhale central California roads. Flat-out, the slowest two still do a claimed 190 mph.

CUYAMA
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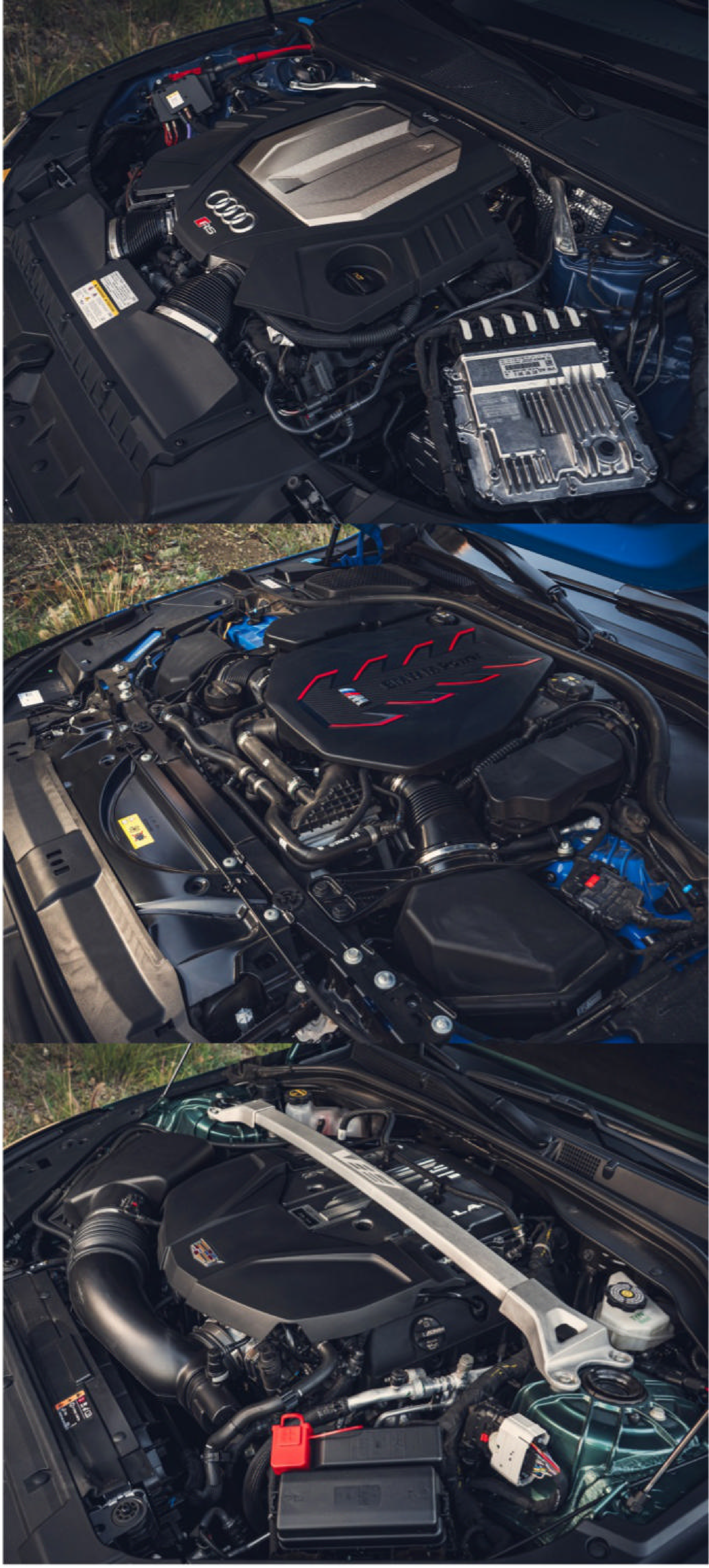


Got V-8? These three engines (and the BMW's traction motor) combine to make 2006 horsepower and 2024 pound-feet of torque.

POWERTRAIN AND PERFORMANCE

Engine downsizing? Not here, bub. All three supersedans carry the 20th century's chosen engine configuration, but each car goes about power delivery in its own way.

The Cadillac's supercharged 6.2-liter V-8 has the most displacement, and it ships 668 horsepower and 659 pound-feet of torque to the rear wheels via a 10-speed autobox. At 4.0 liters, the Audi's twin-turbo V-8 is the smallest of the group, and its output is midpack, sending 621 horses and 627 pound-feet through an eight-speed automatic transmission to all four wheels. The BMW's twin-turbo 4.4-liter V-8 technically has the least muscle, at just 577 ponies and 553 pound-feet, but the 194-hp electric motor housed within the eight-speed automatic bumps combined powertrain output to a lofty 717 horsepower and 738 pound-feet.

With a two-driven-wheel traction penalty, the Cadillac was the least efficient at converting muscle to standing-start hustle. The Blackwing's 3.7-second run to 60 mph meant it trailed both the M5's 3.0-second time and the RS7's 2.9.

BMW may have the power advantage, but its tremendous mass counteracts that. With its electric motor providing instant torque, the M5 did rise to the top of the 5-to-60-mph chart at 3.5 seconds, a half-second slower than from standing. On the other hand, the Cadillac's 0.3-second delta (3.7 to 4.0 seconds) showed that its supercharger is more responsive than the turbochargers of the bunch.

Aided by a set of track-focused Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2Rs, part of the Precision package, the Cadillac proved to be the grippiest around the skidpad at 1.09 g's. The Audi on its Continental SportContact 7s wasn't far behind at 1.06 g's, while the heavyweight BMW, wearing Hankook Ventus S1 Evo Zs, played caboose as it mustered just 0.98 g.

The BMW also needed 324 feet to stop from 100 mph, sailing past the Cadillac (311 feet) and the Audi (288 feet). All the sedans featured carbon-ceramic stoppers.

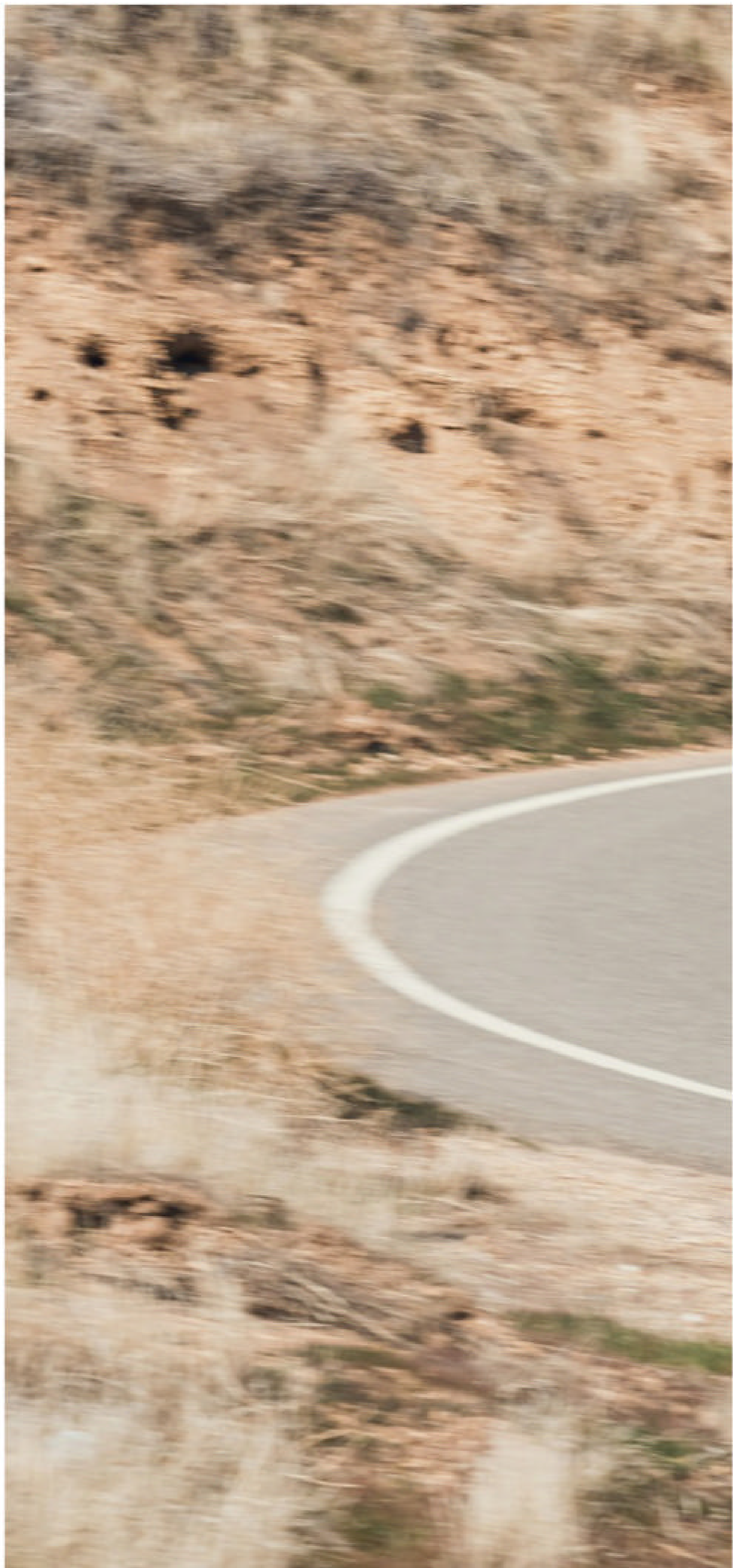
Neither the M5 nor the RS7 possesses the sublime handling character of the CT5-V Blackwing with the Precision package, but they're close, and the Caddy sets a very high bar.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

The Cadillac's downshifts weren't just the hastiest but also the most violent. Whenever we mated throttle to firewall, or even reached the halfway point, the screaming V-8 would break the rear tires loose. Thankfully, Cadillac's traction management did a great job of keeping the nose pointed in the right direction on the mountain roads overlooking Ojai, but steely-nerved hotshoes can add extra angular momentum by dialing back the nannies. BMW offers a rear-drive mode for playing drifter, but in the Audi, going sideways requires more effort.

As we bombed our way through what felt like an endless stream of decreasing-radius, off-camber hairpins, the Blackwing's latest trick—the new-for-2025 Precision package—proved it's worth $18,000. Changes to the suspension, including new steering knuckles and stiffer bushings, pair with software revisions in just about every subsystem. The goal was to improve steering precision, and by golly, it worked: Logbook entries from all three drivers praised the CT5-V as the best-steering and best-handling car of the bunch.

The Audi was also impressive in the canyons, with its all-wheel drive rocketing the car out of corners. In the high-speed sections, the Audi offered grip in spades, though we found the steering and the brake pedal a little too touchy. The RS7 felt like a mechanical cheat code: Point and shoot your way down the road and still feel like a total champion, even if you don't know a corner



apex from an apex predator. The optional 22-inch wheels contributed to a pretty brittle ride around town. We suspect you might be more comfortable with the standard 21-inchers.

The RS7 is content to live well within the realm of mechanical physics. The CT5-V resides a little closer to the ragged edge. But the M5 straight-up defies it, feeling simultaneously like an M5 and, thanks to its sheer physical proportions, like the M7 that BMW never built. But once we adjusted to the girth and chucked this bright-blue brute into some corners, the M5 felt very nearly as agile as its lighter competition. That size hides speed well too; in the faster sections, it was frighteningly easy to get the M5 up to velocities that only aircraft could pace.

After a rock-throwing contest, a comparison-test tradition, the crew gathered to learn more about writer Krok's stylish Golf Wang sweatshirt.

	2025 Audi RS7 Performance	2025 BMW M5	2025 Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing with Precision Package
TEST RESULTS			
Acceleration			
30 mph	**1.0 sec**	1.1 sec	1.6 sec
60 mph	**2.9 sec**	3.0 sec	3.7 sec
100 mph	6.9 sec	**6.7 sec**	7.7 sec
150 mph	17.0 sec	**15.0 sec**	18.8 sec
1/4-Mile @ mph	11.1 sec @ 125	**10.9 sec** @ **130**	11.7 sec @ 124
	Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.	*Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.2 sec.*	*Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.*
Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	4.0 sec	**3.5 sec**	4.0 sec
Top Gear, 30–50 mph	2.4 sec	2.1 sec	**1.8 sec**
Top Gear, 50–70 mph	2.9 sec	2.3 sec	**2.2 sec**
Top Speed	190 mph (mfr claim)	190 mph (mfr claim)	**205 mph** (*C/D* est)
Chassis			
Braking, 70–0 mph	**143 ft**	157 ft	162 ft
Braking, 100–0 mph	**288 ft**	324 ft	311 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	1.06 g	0.98 g	**1.09 g**
Weight			
Curb	4830 lb	5251 lb	**4127 lb**
Distribution, F/R	55.9/44.1%	54.5/45.5%	54.3/45.7%
Fuel			
Capacity/Octane	**19.3 gal**/93	15.9 gal/93	17.4 gal/93
EPA Comb/City/Hwy	**17/14/21 mpg**	14/12/17 mpg	15/13/20 mpg
EPA Electric Range	–	**25 mi**	–
C/D 500-mi Trip	15 mpg	**18 mpg**	14 mpg
Sound Level			
Idle/Full Throttle	**38/77 dBA**	41/86 dBA	46/86 dBA
70-mph Cruise	**66 dBA**	67 dBA	69 dBA

Tested by Dan Edmunds and K.C. Colwell in California City, CA

We're not sure it's ethical to refer to sedans capable of accelerating to 60 mph in three seconds or less as losers, so let's just call them first and second runners-up.

AND THE WINNER IS . . .
The times may be a-changin', but over a few days and several hundred miles, the Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing showed that a classic can still jam. Sure, this car makes some sacrifices to keep its base price low, and ticking options boxes will destroy the value proposition, but the Caddy's driving dynamics and overall packaging earned Detroit the win. Tail-happy rear-drive antics pair perfectly with the Blackwing's huffing and puffing V-8.

When it came time to fill out our ballots, the BMW proved that new technology isn't always superior. The plug-in powertrain might scratch a tech-nerd itch, and it was a delight when the speeds approached triple digits, but simply tooling around town left us wishing the Bimmer felt smaller and lighter.

The Audi, with its preternatural sense of the road ahead, came close to victory, but at the end of the day, the Cadillac was the car we wanted to hear and drive more than any other. We will miss the big Blackwing's straightforward nature when electrification comes for it.

Equipped with the new Precision package, the Cadillac manages to hold on to its supersedan title. It's clear that the rear-drive V-8 performance sedan will not go gentle into that good night. [*That's Dylan Thomas, Krok—Ed.*]

Final Results

	VEHICLE												POWERTRAIN						CHASSIS						EXPERIENCE	
	DRIVER COMFORT	ERGONOMICS	REAR-SEAT COMFORT	REAR-SEAT SPACE*	CARGO SPACE*	FEATURES/AMENITIES*	FIT AND FINISH	INTERIOR STYLING	EXTERIOR STYLING	REBATES/EXTRAS*	AS-TESTED PRICE*	SUBTOTAL	1/4-MILE ACCELERATION*	FLEXIBILITY*	FUEL ECONOMY*	ENGINE NVH	TRANSMISSION	SUBTOTAL	PERFORMANCE*	STEERING FEEL	BRAKE FEEL	HANDLING	RIDE	SUBTOTAL	FUN TO DRIVE	GRAND TOTAL
Maximum points available	10	10	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	5	20	100	20	5	10	10	10	55	20	10	10	10	10	60	25	240
1. Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing	9	9	3	5	1	8	8	8	9	0	20	80	16	4	6	10	9	45	17	10	9	10	9	55	24	204
2. Audi RS7	7	8	5	5	5	10	9	9	9	0	16	83	19	2	7	8	9	45	20	8	6	9	8	51	21	200
3. BMW M5	9	7	4	5	2	10	9	7	7	1	18	79	20	4	10	7	8	49	15	7	8	9	9	48	21	197

*These objective scores are calculated from the vehicles' dimensions, capacities, rebates and extras, and/or test results.

4RUNNER

OPEN
SMITH
TEXAS

4LIFE

We step into the idealized lifestyle of a Toyota 4Runner owner to see how the 2025 Trailhunter enables our sport-utility fantasies.

by Ezra Dyer / photography by Greg Pajo

TOYOTA

TRAILHUNTER

THE TOYOTA 4RUNNER IS IMMORTAL, BOTH AGED AND AGELESS,

an omnipresent towering riposte to the notion that building sport-utility vehicles the way cars are built is the logical solution to the world's SUV needs. The 4Runner is tall and ungainly. It is inefficient in packaging and fuel economy, not quick, and expensive for its size. Toyota can't build enough of them.

At least, that's always been the case. We expect that the new 2025 4Runner will continue the hot streak established by its venerable predecessor, which enjoyed a 15-year production run even though it was basically made of bronze and granite, or maybe because of that. The latest 4Runner is considerably revamped, even though it doesn't look radically different to the casual observer. Employing the same TNGA-F platform that underpins the Land Cruiser, the Tacoma, the Tundra, and the Sequoia, the reborn 4Runner doesn't make any radical departures from its ancient template: body-on-frame construction, live rear axle and independent front suspension, rear glass that rolls down into the hatch. A time traveler from the mid-1990s would find the 2025 iteration fundamentally familiar.

Of course, the trusted recipe is now suffused with modernity. Both powertrains use a turbocharged 2.4-liter four-cylinder, with uplevel trims hybridized and offering up to 326 horsepower and 465 pound-feet of torque. You can get the obligatory big touchscreen—14.0 inches—and every trim comes with a full menu of driver-assist features. TRD Pro and Trailhunter models include an electronic front anti-roll-bar disconnect for more loosey-goosey off-road suspension articulation. To figure out how all of this newness aligns with the 4Runner mission statement, we procured a Trailhunter and endeavored to see how the redesign complements and enhances the Official 4Runner Lifestyle.

And what's that, you ask? Well, as a guy who wears Patagonia hats and owns multiple tow straps, I'll tell you. The 4Runner buyer is a dreamer, and the dream is predicated on outdoor adventures. If you're not hiking in the backcountry, you're off-roading. If you're not off-roading, you're surfing. If the waves are flat, you're skiing. That back window is rolled down, and gear is poking out of it for the world to see—and envy. Sure, you might occasionally roll into a Starbucks parking lot, but only on your way to some kind of recreational activity that might require antivenom. So pack your crampons and come along as we put the Trailhunter to work.

While a base 4Runner starts at $42,220, the Trailhunter trim opens at $68,350. For that outlay, you could hunt the trails – or cruise the land, or even 550 the GX.

Highs: **Quicker, casually unstoppable off-road, rear window still rolls down.** **Lows:** **Chatterbox air intake, hybrid battery compromises cargo space, can be more expensive than the Land Cruiser.**
Verdict: **The 4Runner goes Hollywood.**

SURFING

At Venice Beach in Los Angeles, nobody looks twice when you climb out of a Toyota 4Runner in a sodden wet suit and stride into a hotel. Okay, one guy did: the one who said, “Is that the 2025 4Runner? I was going to wait for one of those, but I got a Tacoma instead!” He looked pained. Here was the new 4Runner, beach sand smeared across the lip of its rear window, driven by a barefoot guy in a wet suit. Presented with this tableau of peak 4Runner life, he was clearly ruing his impatience. Because, sure, a board peeking over the tailgate of a Tacoma is cool, but not as cool as one sticking out of the rolled-down rear window of a 4Runner. We can’t explain why this is true, but it’s a fundamental fact.

On this particular day, I was the only person surfing. I later learned that was due to the presence of bacteria from rain runoff and not just crummy waves and frigid temperatures. But as I like to say, wobbly surfing in spin-cycle breakers is still 100 percent more surfing than the people on the beach are doing. I think the Jeff Spicoli look-alike who rented me the board honestly thought I was just using it for a photo prop, because when I walked in, soaking wet, to return it he exclaimed, “No way! You’re the man!”

The aura of the 4Runner was upon me, totally. Only when I walked back out to the parking lot did I realize that my plan hadn’t included a towel or flip-flops. No matter. I easily mopped

Somehow, 33-inch tires don’t look huge on the Trailhunter. The hybrid powertrain precludes a third row, which is just as well.

TEXAS
GES-841

Behold as the Trailhunter feasts upon its prey, a trail. Cameras provide a view of nearby rocks, but sometimes you still need to embrace an advanced off-road terrain-assessment technique known as “takin’ a gander at it.”

the Trailhunter’s SofTex synthetic upholstery with a spare T-shirt, and the rubber floor mats were fully compatible with wet, sandy feet. The longboard fit inside—two feet of it extended out the rear window, of course. In places where access to surf spots requires a bit of beach driving, like Cape Cod and the Outer Banks, this would be quite the chariot.

OFF-ROADING

Cactus Flat sounds like the name of a mopey country-music band, but it’s actually a high-desert vehicle playground near Big Bear Lake, about three hours inland. This, I figured, was the place for off-roading and hiking, which tend to go hand in hand—the best way to assess a trail and its obstacles is to walk it first.

The Trailhunter, as its name implies, is built for this kind of work, with Old Man Emu dampers (external reservoirs on the rears), the disconnecting front anti-roll bar, an electronically locking rear differential, and 33-inch Toyo Open Country A/T III all-terrain tires. Production models will include an onboard air compressor and full skid plates, but this prototype was miss-

TOW HAUL
DRIVE MODE
MTS
DAC/CRAWL
Check surroundings for safety

ing the compressor and front skid plate. Even in this *superleggera* trim, the Trailhunter weighed in at 5441 pounds, 641 pounds heftier than the last 4Runner TRD Pro we tested in 2022.

Despite the weight, the new 4Runner is quicker than the 2022 relic. The Trailhunter hits 60 mph in 6.7 seconds, 1.0 second better than the previous gen. That advantage wanes as speeds climb, with the 2025 model running the quarter-mile in 15.3 seconds at 88 mph versus the 2022's 16.0 seconds at 86 mph. Fine, nobody buys a 4Runner for drag races. Or skidpad heroics—the Trailhunter generated 0.74 g in lateral acceleration. In the 4Runner state of mind, pavement is just that annoying thing you drive on to reach the dirt.

And out in the boonies, the Trailhunter is hugely capable. My chosen track was steep, narrow, and rock strewn, the kind of trail where there's a mountain wall on one side and a cliff on the other. Fortunately, the Trailhunter's 10.1 inches of ground clearance largely obviated my concern about the lack of front skid plate, and the phalanx of cameras meant that I didn't get as much obstacle-recon exercise as I anticipated since I could precisely locate every rock in the vicinity without leaving the driver's seat. In low range, with the diff locked and the front anti-roll bar disconnected, the Trailhunter just walked up and over whatever was in its way, with that massive torque available at just 1700 rpm.

All of these low-speed exertions were accompanied by a soundtrack of sighs and whistles from the high-mounted air intake, which might

OPINION

COUNTERPOINTS

I'm happy to see a new 4Runner after so many years, even if I maintain a soft spot for the outgoing model's rugged simplicity. The new version's modern interior, plethora of configurations, and latest Tacoma underpinnings make for a strong foundation. My worry is that Toyota is trying too hard to satisfy too many tastes, and with such a large spread in price and capability. The cabin certainly doesn't feel $60K-plus nice, and I'm not sold on the benefits of the hybrid system. The lineup's overlap with the also-new Toyota Land Cruiser and Lexus GX550 further complicates matters. While there's a lot to like here, if I were in the market, I'd be very discerning with the order form. —*Mike Sutton*

Modern powertrains are resilient. It's rare in our testing to observe a thermal overload, but with Toyota's latest hybrid configurations that power the Sequoia, the Tacoma, and the Tundra, we've noticed the transmission temperatures flirting with the red zone. The same goes for the new 4Runner. After a handful of acceleration runs, the transmission heats up to the point that it upshifts earlier in the tach swing, and the thrust is dialed back. We don't hear a fan blowing in an attempt to cool the transmission fluid, and the temps are very slow to recover. All this while testing in mild ambient conditions has us wondering how this gearbox would stand up to abuse in the dunes or in sweltering heat. —*David Beard*

Don't call the Trailhunter's high-mounted intake a snorkel, because it's meant to find dust-free air, not enable deep-water crossings. Also don't call it Lil' Whistley the Toot-Toot Tube, because it hates that.

prove to be the Trailhunter's most controversial feature. Clinging to the passenger's-side A-pillar, the intake is your direct line to the very chatty turbocharger, and it's actually not a snorkel—its intent is to find dust-free air up high, not to enable heroic deep-water crossings. I love some intake noise, but the Trailhunter's constant screes and whooshes will test your commitment to the concept because there are few scenarios when the bulky, shed-shaped 4Runner isn't under boost. The snorkel also saps three horsepower from the turbo four, reducing the combined output to 323 ponies. Hey, if you don't want to hear the turbo all the time, you can go for any of the other eight trims. Or a Highlander.

SKIING

The best ski day of my life was enabled by a 4Runner. Back in 2010, when the previous generation was new, I was driving from Sacramento to Lake Tahoe as a blizzard set in. At a checkpoint ahead of the Donner Pass, highway officials were forcing lesser vehicles to chain up or turn around. The 4Runner, though, got a nod of approval, and I was allowed through just before they closed the pass entirely—meaning that the next day, I awoke to four feet of powder and no crowds. What was in the parking lot was 90 percent 4Runners.

This time, there was no blizzard, but history repeated itself when I pulled into the hotel parking lot in Big Bear Lake and slotted the Trailhunter between two other 4Runners, one of which was running. I'd hoped the driver would notice the new 4Runner and comment, but he was oblivious, which I guess proves that the sixth-gen 4Runner will not shock the sensibilities of the faithful. Its styling does not scream all-new.

Under the skin, though, the Trailhunter's hybrid system represents a major shift from the prior generation's big V-6 and five-speed automatic. The i-Force Max powertrain, as Toyota calls it, augments the turbo four and eight-speed automatic with a 48-hp electric motor and an estimated 0.9-kWh nickel-metal hydride battery pack. The battery is one reason why the cargo floor is about three feet off the ground. With the cargo net in place, throwing a suitcase into the back feels like one of those strongman keg-tossing competitions. The hybrids also forgo the third-row seating available in the SR5 and the nonhybrid Limited.

Besides its power upgrade, the hybrid system also bumps up fuel economy, at least on paper. Nonhybrid four-wheel-drive models earn an EPA combined estimate of 21 mpg, while the hybrids are rated at 23. That seems optimistic given that my best tank of fuel—burned mainly in highway

WIDDLE WADDERS

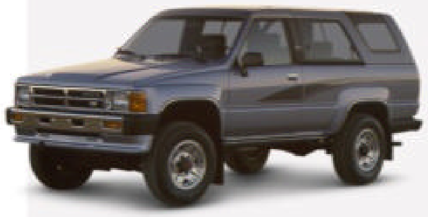
If you're not familiar with this 4Runner-specific meme, it involves making fun of a 4Runner with a roof ladder in the manner of an impressed toddler: "Oh, got a widdle wadder on your TRD Pwo? So you can cwimb up your widdle wadder to the top of your woof?" The Widdle Wadder movement is so widespread that you can now buy tiny magnetized ladders to stick on 4Runners (or your fridge). Perhaps not coincidentally, Toyota does not offer a ladder, widdle or otherwise, on the 2025 4Runner.

After figuring out how to disable the 4Runner's Proactive Driving Assist, Dyer must wrestle with some newfangled front-entry ski boots.

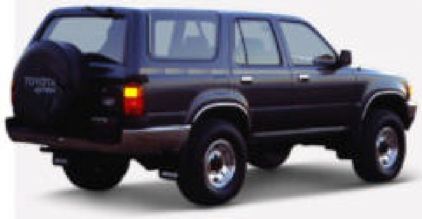
A GOOD RUN

41 YEARS OF 4RUNNER

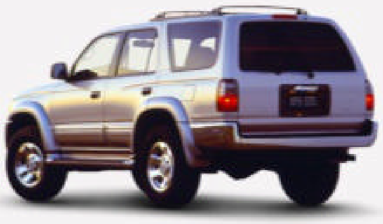
When the Toyota 4Runner debuted in 1984, the term "sport-utility vehicle" was new enough that it needed spelling out. The 4Runner played a large part in bringing SUVs to the mainstream. While the mid-size ute developed a more highway-friendly attitude over its four decades and six generations, it has maintained off-road credibility with four-wheel drive, body-on-frame construction, and ample ground clearance. There aren't many vehicles that look as comfortable in a Whole Foods parking lot as they do traversing Devil's Peak in Baja California, but the 4Runner is one of them. —*Austin Parsons*



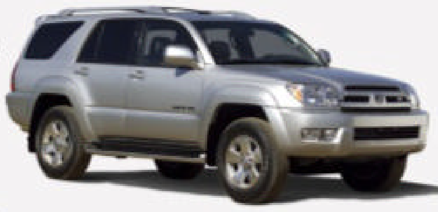
First Generation
(1984–89)
Little more than a Toyota Hilux pickup with an optional rear bench seat, a removable fiberglass bed cap, and a roll-down rear window, the original 4Runner blended trucklike utility with a pinch of commuter sensibility. With the hard top in place, the two-door cabin was comparatively quiet on the highway, while solid axles front and rear provided confidence off-road. For 1986, the balance shifted slightly toward on-road comfort with the adoption of an independent front suspension. None of the available powertrains were potent, with the standard 2.4-liter inline-four producing 96 horsepower. Output inched upward in later years, thanks to fuel injection and optional turbocharging, but even the most powerful 150-hp V-6 (available after 1988) wheezed at the sight of a steep hill.



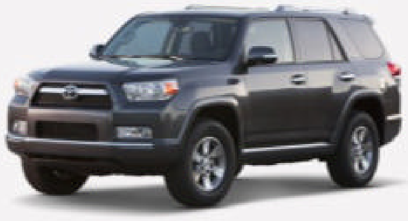
Second Generation
(1990–95)
Though still based on the Hilux pickup, the second-gen 4Runner started to take on its own identity with a four-door body style and a fixed roof. A two-door model was offered until 1993, but the four-door variant was the volume seller that put the 4Runner on the map. This generation ditched the previous rear leaf springs in favor of coils. The 150-hp 3.0-liter V-6 got it to 60 mph in a laughable 15.7 seconds.



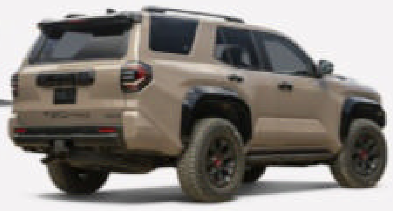
Third Generation
(1996–2002)
This 4Runner embraced its role as a suburban SUV with rack-and-pinion steering and a new coil-spring control-arm front suspension, while its body, frame, and chassis were unique to distinguish it from the Tacoma. The third-gen 4Runner retained its off-road emphasis with a part-time four-wheel-drive system and an electronically locking rear differential. The ghost of pickups past still haunted its engine bay, which housed either a 183-hp 3.4-liter V-6 or a 150-hp 2.7-liter inline-four from the Tacoma. The new V-6 lopped the 4Runner's 60-mph time down to 10.0 seconds. A manual transmission was available until 2001.



Fourth Generation
(2003–09)
Power and plushness were the fourth-gen 4Runner's hallmarks. The biggest, heaviest, and most luxurious 4Runner to date, it was also the most powerful. A 2005 model with the optional 270-hp V-8 hit 60 mph in 7.2 seconds. Its larger dimensions granted more front and rear passenger volume. Despite shifting the 4Runner paradigm toward on-pavement comfort, the fourth gen was still capable off-road. The V-6 featured a part-time four-wheel-drive system, while V-8 models had full-time four-wheel drive; both came with a Torsen locking center differential.



Fifth Generation
(2010–24)
The fifth-generation 4Runner was appealing for what it kept rather than what it gained. In a time when most SUVs had long since transitioned to unibody construction, the 4Runner retained its body-on-frame approach. Retro touches, including a manual transfer-case selector and cloth seats, gave the fifth gen a nostalgic charm. Even its engine options—notably sans V-8—harked back to earlier generations, with a four-cylinder or a V-6, the latter of which got a '22 model to 60 mph in 7.7 seconds. It offered some modern off-roading aids such as multiple terrain modes and available crawl and hydraulic anti-roll control. The fifth gen stuck around the longest of any version, with one cosmetic refresh for 2014.



Sixth Generation
(2025–)
This 4Runner is the first to offer a hybrid powertrain and an eight-speed automatic transmission. Adaptive dampers on Limited and Platinum models target on-road comfort. The trail-tackling trims feature 33-inch all-terrain tires, a locking rear diff, and a fortified suspension. Even with all the new features, the latest 4Runner still has body-on-frame construction, available four-wheel drive with low range, a solid rear axle, and a roll-down rear window. Some things never change.

2025 Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter

PRICE

4Runner Trailhunter Base	$68,350
4Runner Trailhunter as Tested	$68,350

A group of three or more 4Runners is called a "business." Most 4Runners are docile. They're often found in close proximity to REI stores and craft breweries.

driving and while descending more than 4000 feet in elevation—scored 18 mpg. The hybrid system does allow limited electric-only driving, which raises eyebrows in a ski-area parking lot: Why does that 4Runner sound like a Prius?

It is true that, on the day of my Big Bear visit, a 4Runner Trailhunter was not strictly necessary to reach the mountain. But it did help my cred in the resort parking area, which was a party unto itself, with music blaring and drinks flowing as adventurers donned their gear. I could have contributed to the cacophony with the removable JBL Bluetooth speaker that doubles as the audio system's center channel on the dash, but I chose to use my parking-lot time to learn how to disable Proactive Driving Assist, which functions like an overly fastidious driver's-ed instructor grabbing the wheel and prodding at the brake pedal. I would've done this sooner, but the system wasn't as obnoxious in SoCal's infamous traffic.

The JBL speaker, the branded overland accessories, and even the hybrid system all fall under the category of things a 4Runner can do without. I know the point of a model like the Trailhunter is to demonstrate the 4Runner's potential (while banking fat profits), but I suspect that the soul of the range lies closer to trims like the $44,220 SR5 4WD: simple, rugged, and more attainable to people who actually play in the mud with their SUVs.

Should a 4Runner cost more than some Land Cruisers? The Trailhunter prompts that question, but it's one that doesn't necessarily need an answer. You don't need perfect waves, as long as you're out there.

Vehicle Type: front-engine, front-motor, rear/4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door wagon
Options: none **Infotainment:** 14.0-inch touchscreen; wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay; satellite radio (3 months included); 5 USB-C (4 for power only) and Bluetooth inputs; Wi-Fi hotspot (1 month or 1.0 GB included); JBL stereo, 14 speakers

ENGINE

turbocharged and intercooled inline-4, aluminum block and head
Bore x Stroke 3.44 x 3.92 in, 87.5 x 99.5 mm
Displacement 146 in³, 2393 cm³
Compression Ratio 11.0:1
Fuel Delivery: port and direct injection
Turbocharger: IHI
Maximum Boost Pressure 16.0 psi
Valve Gear: double overhead cams, 4 valves per cylinder, variable intake- and exhaust-valve timing
Redline/Fuel Cutoff 6200/4500–6200 rpm
Power 275 hp @ 6000 rpm
Torque 317 lb-ft @ 1700 rpm

MOTOR

permanent-magnet synchronous AC
Power 48 hp
Torque 184 lb-ft

COMBINED OUTPUT

Power 323 hp @ 6000 rpm
Torque 465 lb-ft @ 1700 rpm

BATTERY PACK

air-cooled nickel-metal hydride
Cell Count/Construction 240/prismatic
Usable Capacity (*C/D* est) 0.9 kWh

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission: 8-speed automatic
Final-Drive Ratio 3.58:1
4-Wheel-Drive System: part-time 2-speed with an electronically locking rear differential
Transfer-Gear Ratios 2.57:1/1.00:1

GEAR	RATIO	MPH PER 1000 RPM	MAX SPEED IN GEAR (rpm)
❶	4.41	2.3/6.0	10/37 mph (4500/6200)
❷	2.81	3.7/9.4	23/58 mph (6200/6200)
❸	1.95	5.3/13.5	33/84 mph (6200/6200)
❹	1.51	6.8/17.4	42/108 mph (6200/6200)
❺	1.27	8.1/20.7	49/112 mph (6200/5400)
❻	1.00	10.3/26.3	51/112 mph (6200/4250)
❼	0.79	–/33.2	–/112 mph (–/3375)
❽	0.65	–/40.4	–/112 mph (–/2775)

CHASSIS

full-length frame
Body Material: aluminum and steel stampings

STEERING

rack-and-pinion with variable electric power assist
Ratio 17.4:1
Turns Lock-to-Lock 3.2
Turning Circle Curb-to-Curb 39.4 ft

SUSPENSION

F: ind; unequal-length control arms; coil springs; electronically disconnectable anti-roll bar
R: live axle; 4 trailing links and a Panhard rod; coil springs; anti-roll bar

BRAKES

F: 13.4 x 1.3-in vented disc, 4-piston fixed caliper
R: 13.2 x 0.8-in vented disc, 1-piston sliding caliper
Stability Control: partially and fully defeatable, traction off

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheels: cast aluminum, 8.5 x 18 in
Tires: Toyo Open Country A/T III, 265/70R-18 116H 3PMSF

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase 112.2 in
Length 194.9 in
Width 79.9 in
Height 74.0 in

Front Track 66.8 in
Rear Track 66.9 in
Passenger Volume, F/R 56/44 ft³
Cargo Volume Behind F/R 83/43 ft³
Approach Angle 33.0°
Break-Over Angle 24.0°
Departure Angle 24.0°
Ground Clearance 10.1 in

COMPETITORS

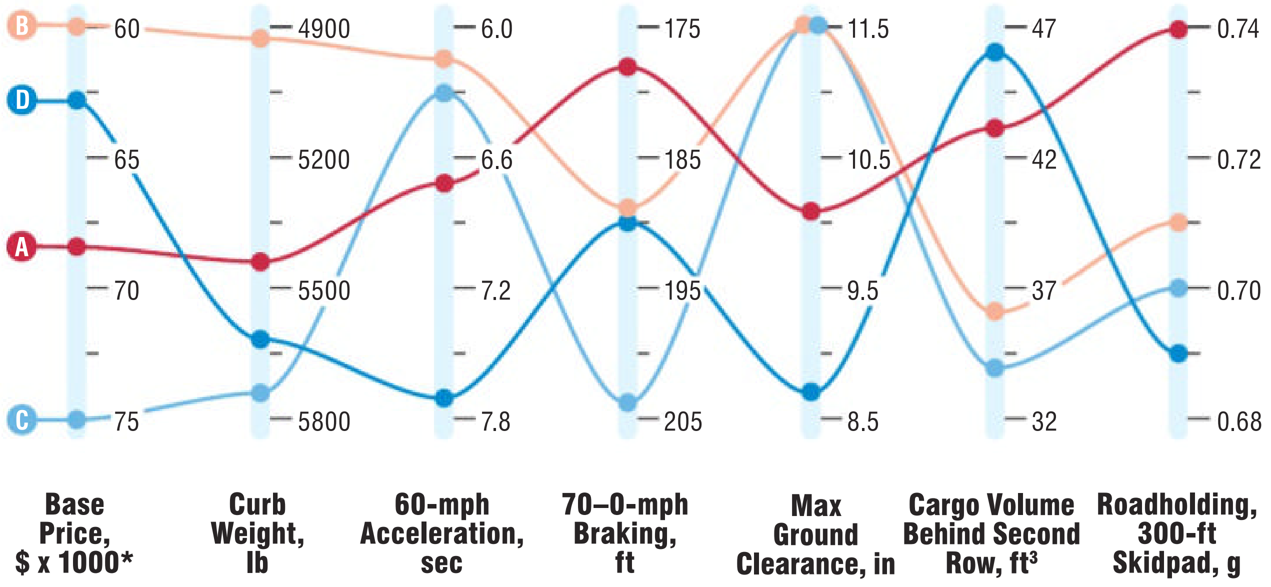
This set could be all Toyota, but we've mixed in some American and British flair.

Ⓐ **Toyota 4Runner Trailhunter**
2.4-L I-4 + motor, 323 hp; 8-sp auto

Ⓑ **Ford Bronco 4-door Sasquatch**
330-hp 2.7-L V-6, 10-sp auto

Ⓒ **Land Rover Defender 110 S**
395-hp 3.0-L I-6, 8-sp auto

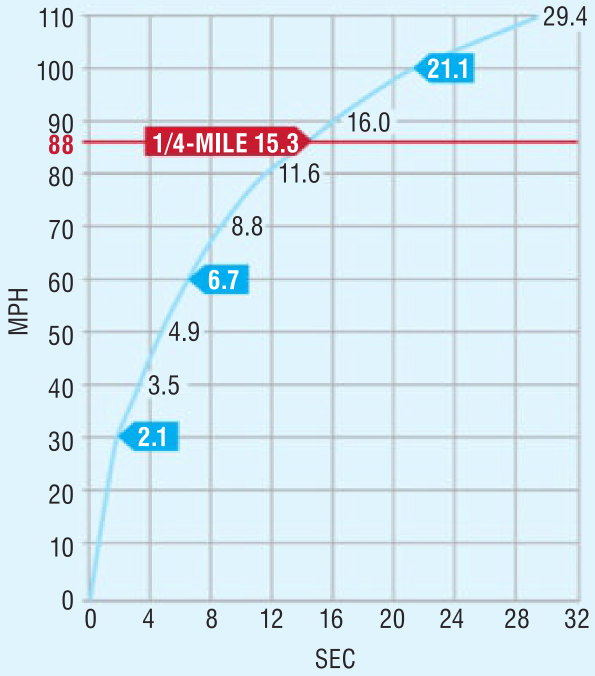
Ⓓ **Toyota Land Cruiser**
2.4-L I-4 + motor, 326 hp; 8-sp auto



*Includes performance-enhancing options.

TEST RESULTS

Acceleration



Results in graph omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph 7.4 sec
Top Gear, 30–50 mph 4.1 sec
Top Gear, 50–70 mph 4.8 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd) 112 mph

Handling

Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad 0.74 g
Understeer: moderate

Braking

70–0 mph 178 ft
Fade: slight

Weight

Curb 5441 lb
Per Horsepower 16.8 lb
Distribution, F/R 49.4/50.6%
Towing Capacity 6000 lb

Fuel

Capacity 19.0 gal
Octane 87

C/D Fuel Economy

Observed 17 mpg

EPA Fuel Economy

Comb/City/Hwy 23/23/24 mpg

Interior Sound Level

Idle 30 dBA
Full Throttle 73 dBA
70-mph Cruising 70 dBA

Tested by David Beard in California City, CA

Weather or Not

Big names from the newest tire category battle it out on dry, wet, and snow-covered surfaces to see which is the ultimate evolution in all-season rubber.

by Austin Irwin / photograph by John Roe

YOU DON'T NEED TO WATCH *Married at First Sight* to get the gist of it. Two strangers meet at the altar, share a big wet smooch, and get married—no dates, no conversations. Just a wild gamble. If the relationship hits a pothole, they can bail at the end of the season. It's an outrageous way to find love. It's also a ridiculous way to shop for tires. Especially the kissing part.

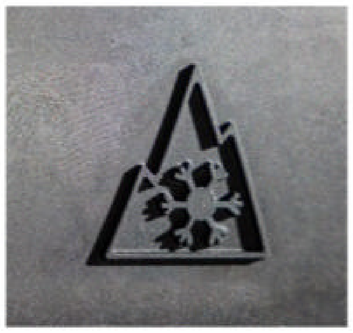
Yet many people purchase tires without as much as a test drive, and it's why tire testing is so valuable. It's impossible to tell just by looking, but every tire behaves differently, even in identical conditions. And buying the most expensive option doesn't guarantee happiness.

For this latest foray into matchmaking, we selected five tires in the fledgling all-weather category. If you have never heard of all-weather, don't confuse it with the nearly 50-year-old all-season category. All-weather tires

WEATHERACTIVE

take the one-tire-to-do-it-all directive and bake in more winter capability. The sales pitch on all-weather tires is that they carry the three-peak mountain snowflake (known as 3PMSF) badge of certification that some localities—namely, Quebec and parts of Europe—require in winter months. Since all-weather tires are designed to run year-round, drivers can avoid the twice-a-year swapping of one set of rubber to another and then back again.

All-season tires still dominate the U.S. market, but big players such as Bridgestone, Goodyear, Michelin, Nokian, and Pirelli now sell all-weather tires as well. To see what this new segment delivers, we evaluated the tires on feel, handling, lateral acceleration, and braking on dry, wet, and snowy surfaces, in addition to road noise on dry pavement and acceleration in the snow. Price and warranty also factored into our scoring. In the end, we found the one we wanted to mount and keep mounted.



The mountain-and-snowflake symbol on the sidewall indicates a tire has at least 110 percent of the traction of a reference all-season tire in the snow. It's a pass-or-fail standardized test. The scores aren't made public.

TIRE RACK
Performance Specialists

Wet and dry evaluations took place at Tire Rack's test track in South Bend, Indiana, using the company's BMW 330i xDrive and assistance from its testing crew.

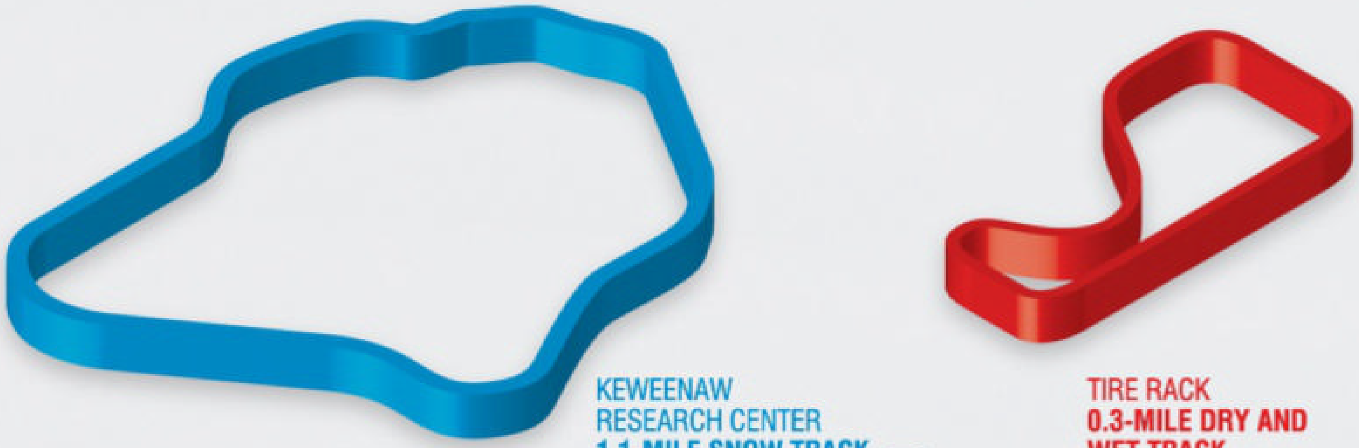
On Location

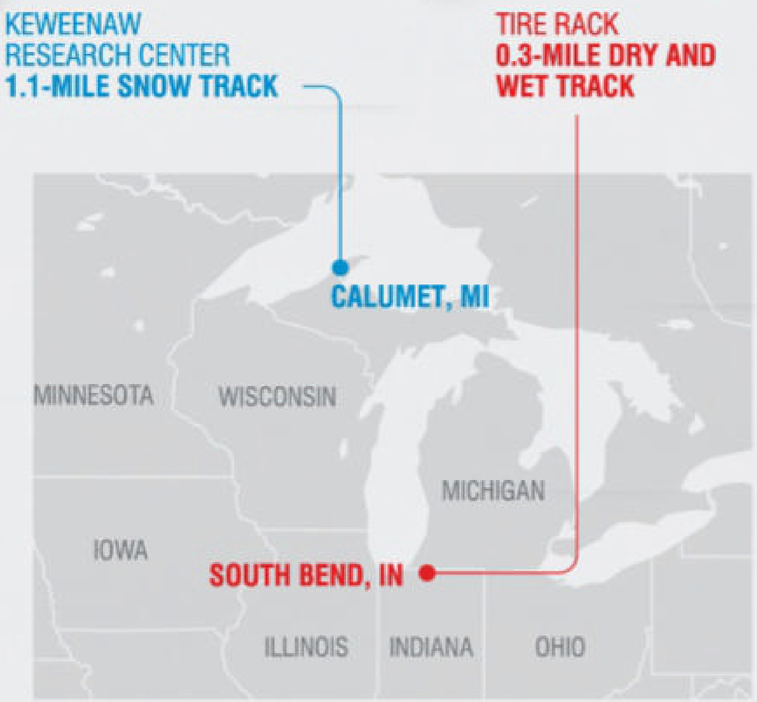
To test in the dry and the wet, we headed to Tire Rack's track in South Bend, Indiana. Built next to one of the company's 12 warehouses containing more than a million tires, it's also where Tire Rack tire information and testing manager TJ Campbell evaluates literally every model that Tire Rack sells.

Campbell has made a career out of mulling over the fine details that separate a good tire from a great one. He is sensitive to tire harmonics, road surfaces, and tread textures, and he's as consistent as the tides around Tire Rack's 0.3-mile autocross course. Brent Rollins, another tire expert, was there to assist, helping collect impressions on each tire's road feel and ride quality.

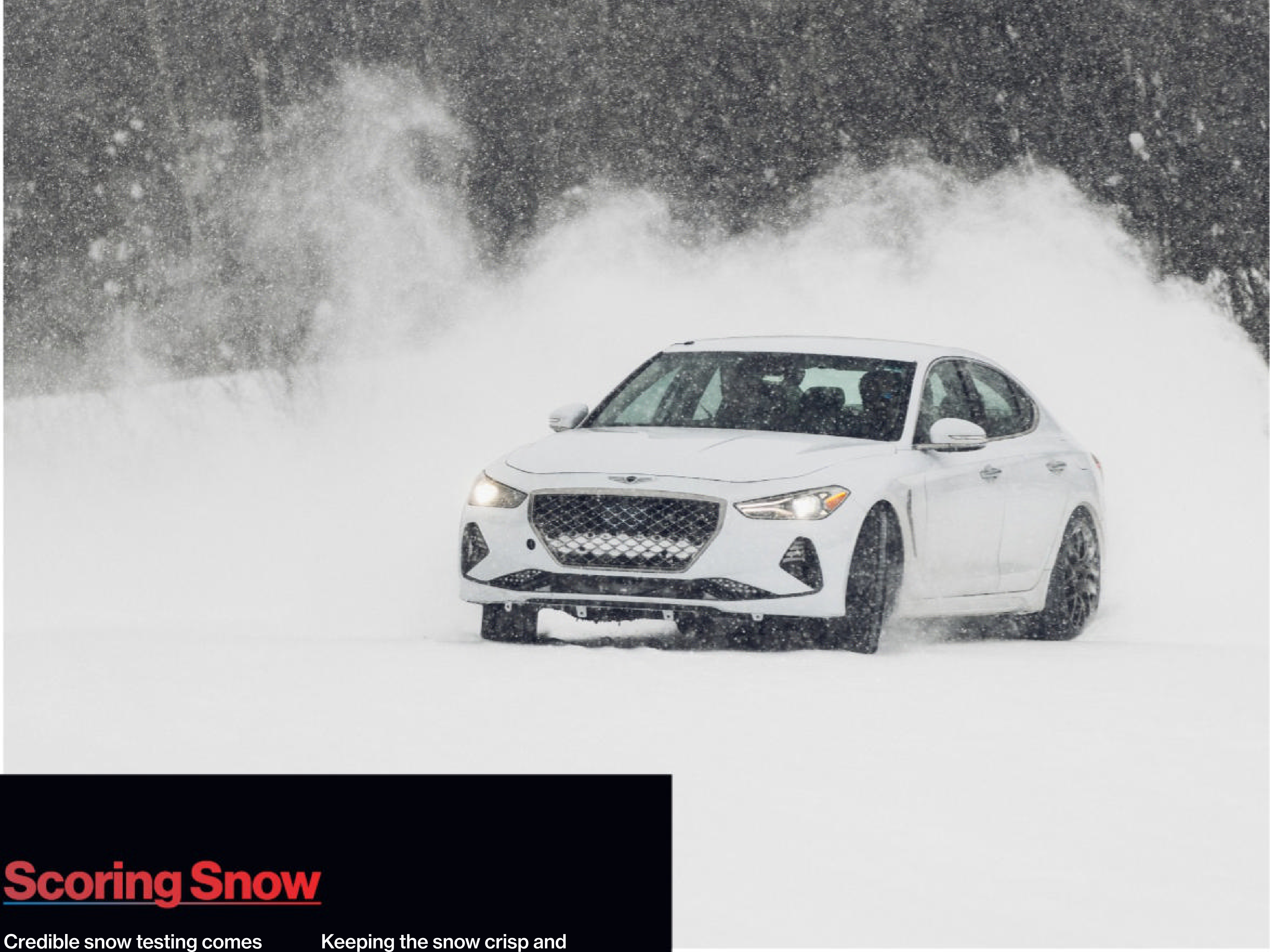
For dry and wet driving, we used a 2024 BMW 330i xDrive. After every two sets of test tires, we reran the control tire. To avoid preconceived bias, we withheld the identity of the tires from the drivers during testing.

For snow, we traveled to Calumet in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. There, automakers, tire manufacturers, and defense contractors use the Michigan Technological University–funded Keweenaw Research Center as a winter proving ground. For this test, we borrowed a rear-wheel-drive 2019 Genesis G70 3.3T from Michelin. It rolls on the same 225/45R-18 tires as the BMW, but unlike the BMW, the Genesis has rear-wheel drive, which gives front-axle feedback unfiltered by driveline happenings. This allowed us to focus closely on the characteristics of the tires interacting with the snow.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SIMARI; INFOGRAPHICS BY NICOLAS RAPP



Scoring Snow

Credible snow testing comes down to consistency from the driver and the environment. We're on the hook for the first, but a snowy surface changes with every pass. To minimize the differences and maintain the roads and consistency its customers demand, Keweenaw Research Center employs a 24-person team that works around the clock, often through weekends, to keep the snow clean, even, and flat. It is a huge effort. At the end of the 10-week test season, employees have logged about as many hours maintaining the snow-covered roads as the engineers have spent using them.

Test-course manager Toby Kunnari's primary tool is a John Deere tractor that lumbers along at 9 mph over the proving ground's 135 lane miles of road. Dragged behind the tractor is a sled that grooms the snow and levels it, similar to what you might see on a snowmobile trail. Keeping the snow crisp and even is just part of it. Cars and tires are meticulously cleaned before entering the test surfaces. Inadvertently adding dirt, oil, or salt to the snow could skew test results.

In addition to dealing with the nearly 100 inches of snow that can fall in a month, Kunnari's team must also consider changing weather conditions. "Wind out of the southwest is crap. It's so wet, it's almost greasy. When we get prevailing winds out of the northwest, the arctic air gives the snow more sheer strength," he says. "It's a challenge. That's why I love it."

TRACTOR SLED: COURTESY OF KEWEENAW RESEARCH CENTER

5th Place: Nokian Remedy WRG5

$220 · 60,000-mile warranty

Despite finishing last, the WRG5, the newest tire in the test, has two significant advantages. First, it has the best warranty: 60,000 miles with no

We borrowed Bibendum's own rear-wheel-drive Genesis G70 3.3T for the snow testing.

age limit. Second, it is a strong performer both on dry pavement and in snow, where it worked as hard as the top-scoring tires in the test to fight understeer.

But when the sprinklers came on, our enthusiasm for the WRG5 dampened. The Nokian's 60-mph stopping distance was nearly 25 feet longer than the best wet-braking performer (the Michelin CrossClimate2). Fitted to the all-wheel-drive BMW 330i, the Nokian brought about oversteer on the wet autocross and slalom. The tire's behavior in the wet overshadowed the WRG5's performance elsewhere and cost the tire in the final accounting.

Mounted to the snowbound rear-drive Genesis G70, the Nokian earned back a few points and proved secure and easy to control. The WRG5's braking distance was only about four feet behind the best performer, and its 63-mph peak speed was the highest around the snowcross track, but it had the second-slowest lap time despite a solid skidpad performance. We also experienced excessive wheelspin on corner exit, similar to the all-season control tire, the Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4.

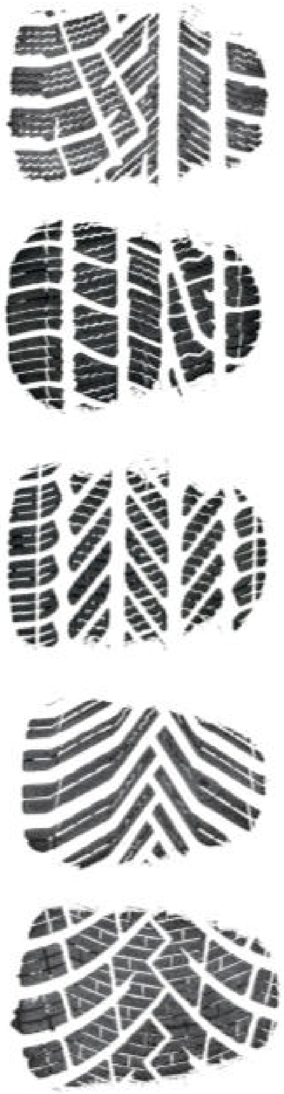
4th Place: Goodyear Assurance WeatherReady

$221 • 6-year/60,000-mile warranty

The Goodyear Assurance WeatherReady is to be superseded by the new Assurance WeatherReady 2, which wasn't available when testing began. Still, as Goodyear's 1977 debut of the Tiempo invented the all-season category, we'd be remiss to exclude the company from this battle. The Assurance scored well in dry conditions on the autocross, on the skidpad, and in braking, and it achieved above-average results in the wet overall, but its snow performance didn't impress.

Keeping the Goodyear-shod G70 pointed straight on the snow course was nothing short of exhausting—the quick countersteering needed to avoid an unrecoverable slide was a wheel-sawing workout. Goodyear's tire finished last in snow braking (arguably the most important winter metric for crash avoidance), but it did post the second-quickest time among the all-weather tires around the snowcross loop.

The Goodyear was an average performer in the dry and sure-footed in the wet, but in the snow, its braking performance isn't much better than the all-season control tire. Perhaps the WeatherReady 2 will address these deficits.



This is all the tire that touches the ground when you're driving down the highway. Can you identify the all-weather tires from their contact patches? Answers on page 58.

TIRE RACK
Performance Specialists

	Country of Origin	Service Description	Tread Depth, in	UTQG wear rating	Interior Sound, 70-mph cruise, dBA
Bridgestone WeatherPeak	Mexico	95V	10/32	**700**	**65**
Goodyear Assurance WeatherReady	Chile	95V	10/32	**700**	67
Michelin CrossClimate2	U.S.	95V	10/32	640	66
Nokian Remedy WRG5	U.S.	95V	**11/32**	600	67
Pirelli Cinturato WeatherActive	Mexico	**95Y**	**11/32**	**700**	67

3rd Place: Bridgestone WeatherPeak

$224 • 5-year/70,000-mile warranty

If the road is covered in white flakes, the Bridgestone WeatherPeak is head and shoulders above the competition. At our cold-weather proving ground, the Bridgestone led the pack with the quickest acceleration and the fastest snow-covered autocross time, as well as the shortest stop from 30 mph. However, the WeatherPeak's dominance melted away once things got hotter.

The difference between the WeatherPeak's and the best performer's braking distance in the dry exceeds a car length, and the Bridgestone tied for the slowest time around the dry autocross. While the squishy tread contributed to a comfy ride against the competition, the squirm led to an annoying tendency to make the car wander and tramline on the highway.

The Bridgestone took first place in the sound category, as we measured a hushed 65 decibels in the cabin at 70 mph. And our subjective impression was that the WeatherPeak is ear-friendly in the dry and in the wet.

Bridgestone's WeatherPeak comes closest to the performance of a dedicated winter tire, but it needs to be better in the other three seasons to really nail the all-weather part of the brief.

Contact-patch answers, from top: Nokian, Goodyear, Bridgestone, Michelin, Pirelli.

2nd Place: Michelin CrossClimate2

$232 • 6-year/60,000-mile warranty

Tire spotters (they exist) can easily identify the distinctive tread pattern of the CrossClimate2 (CC2). This Michelin might be five years old, but it continues to offer an awesome balance of dry, wet, and snow performance. It swept the wet tests, finishing at the top of every objective category. It was responsive to steering, braking, and acceleration inputs, and its wet-traction advantage over other tires resulted in less understeer around every cone. But no triathlon is won in water alone.

In the dry autocross, it understeers resolutely, making it difficult to rotate and balance through the course. The CC2 really wants to plow the front end, even if you drive carefully to avoid understeer. It reacted as firmly as the all-season control tire over big impacts and felt jumpy over anything bigger than small surface imperfections. In addition to our ride complaints, the Michelin is loud on smooth surfaces. That said, the CC2 confidently transitioned without drama from full

To keep our drivers free of bias, the test was blind, meaning only the pit crew knew the identity of the rolling rubber.

Going After the Bogeys

In previous tire tests, we've always argued that there is no replacement for dedicated summer and winter tires. To test that adage, we added a summer tire, the Continental ExtremeContact Sport 02, to the wet and dry testing and a winter tire, the Nokian Hakkapeliitta R5, to the snow testing. Both are among the best of their kind, as the Conti's predecessor came in second in our last summer-tire test, and the R5's forerunner won our last winter-tire test.

The Conti summer tires illustrate how good a summer tire can be in the rain. Stops from 60 mph in the wet only added 20.2 feet to the 109.2-foot dry stopping distance. Meanwhile, the Michelin CC2, the best all-weather in the wet, added 26.6 feet from dry to wet stops. The Nokian WRG5 had the biggest braking delta, with a difference of over 40 feet between the dry and wet stops.

At $251, the winter Nokian is the most expensive tire here, but it loves the snow, stopping 7.2 feet shorter and hitting 30 mph 1.0 second quicker than the best all-weather tire in the test. This tire is better at saving you from a winter problem than a Saint Bernard carrying brandy.

The Michelin Pilot Sport All-Season 4 represented the high-performance all-season control tire. While the Pilot Sport was not part of the test, it's worth noting that it outperformed every all-weather tire in the dry and the wet. However, it suffered too much wheelspin in the snow to have a fighting chance.

DRY TEST RESULTS

DRY TEST RESULTS	262-FT SLALOM, MPH	0.33-MI AUTOCROSS, SEC	200-FT SKIDPAD, G	BRAKING, 60–0 MPH, FT
BRIDGESTONE WEATHERPEAK	30.5	31.0	0.82	140.8
GOODYEAR WEATHERREADY ASSURANCE	30.7	30.7	0.83	134.5
MICHELIN CROSSCLIMATE2	30.6	31.0	0.82	**121.9**
NOKIAN REMEDY WRG5	31.0	30.7	0.82	131.3
PIRELLI CINTURATO WEATHERACTIVE	**31.1**	**30.4**	**0.84**	127.7
CONTINENTAL EXTREMECONTACT SPORT 02	32.3	29.4	0.90	109.2

WET TEST RESULTS

WET TEST RESULTS	262-FT SLALOM, MPH	0.33-MI AUTOCROSS, SEC	200-FT SKIDPAD, G	BRAKING, 60–0 MPH, FT
BRIDGESTONE WEATHERPEAK	27.2	34.2	0.70	161.1
GOODYEAR WEATHERREADY ASSURANCE	28.3	33.5	**0.72**	156.7
MICHELIN CROSSCLIMATE2	**28.6**	**33.3**	**0.72**	**148.5**
NOKIAN REMEDY WRG5	26.8	35.3	0.64	173.3
PIRELLI CINTURATO WEATHERACTIVE	28.4	33.4	0.71	154.7
CONTINENTAL EXTREMECONTACT SPORT 02	30.2	31.0	0.84	129.4

SNOW TEST RESULTS

SNOW TEST RESULTS	ACCEL., 0—30 MPH, SEC	1.1-MI SNOWCROSS, SEC	300-FT SKIDPAD, G	BRAKING, 30–0 MPH, FT
BRIDGESTONE WEATHERPEAK	**7.5**	**86.6**	0.29	**88.6**
GOODYEAR WEATHERREADY ASSURANCE	8.0	92.5	0.29	94.0
MICHELIN CROSSCLIMATE2	8.0	97.9	**0.30**	91.0
NOKIAN REMEDY WRG5	8.1	94.9	0.29	92.7
PIRELLI CINTURATO WEATHERACTIVE	8.1	94.4	0.26	93.8
NOKIAN HAKKAPELIITTA R5	6.5	80.4	0.33	81.4

More than 100 sprinkler heads turn Tire Rack's test course into a soaked Slip 'N Slide.

acceleration to full braking at the tight 90-degree turn that marked the finish of our slalom course.

Although the CC2 had only one win during snow testing, on the 300-foot skidpad, it was arguably the most fun for driving around the 1.1-mile course. It excelled during braking, with lots of longitudinal grip that imbues confidence during high-speed driving. Wet grip and snow grip are what elastomer engineers call a target conflict because an increase in one is a decrease in the other, but Michelin scientists seem to have found a magic compromise in their rubber.

At $232, the Michelin is the priciest tire here. But there's also value: A set of CrossClimate2s is only $48 more than the last-place tires.

Author Irwin (above) got pulled over minutes after getting his license for doing donuts. Little did he know he would need those skills 18 years later.

1st Place: Pirelli Cinturato WeatherActive
$219 • 6-year/60,000-mile warranty

Cinturato, which is Italian for "belted," is a name Pirelli has used to describe radials since the 1950s and one that has been found on the sidewalls of legendary cars such as the Lamborghini Miura and the original Porsche 911 Turbo. That sounds expensive, yet the winner of this test is also the most affordable. Like the Michelin, the Pirelli uses a V-formation directional tread pattern, but it rolls away with a big fat W.

This tire's results on dry pavement made it the clear winner despite its longer stopping distance than the CrossClimate2. Not only is there a lateral-grip advantage, but the Pirelli is also incredibly easy to manage around the autocross track, offering the most responsive and direct steering feel of the group and returning precise reactions to inputs. It rides well too, soaking up bad roads without emitting loud slaps and smacks.

The Pirelli wins because an all-weather tire—skewed for better performance in the wet and the snow—shouldn't make the driver suffer during the most common driving conditions. It was the very best on dry pavement, trailed the leader in snow acceleration to 30 mph by 0.6 second, and swam sipe to sipe with the top performer in the wet. Perhaps there's something to the tread pattern shared by the top two tires here.

As accomplished as the top finishers' results are, drivers will still get the best performance with dedicated summer and winter rubber. That said, the best all-weather tires tested here raise the bar for year-round use and are a boon for those who can't easily store and swap tires. ■

Final Results

	DRY						**WET**						**SNOW**						**TIRE**			
	AUTOCROSS	SKIDPAD	BRAKING	SLALOM	FEEL*	SUBTOTAL	AUTOCROSS	SKIDPAD	BRAKING	SLALOM	FEEL*	SUBTOTAL	BRAKING	SNOWCROSS	SKIDPAD	ACCELERATION	FEEL*	SUBTOTAL	WARRANTY	PRICE	SOUND	**GRAND TOTAL**
Maximum points available	*30*	*20*	*20*	*10*	*10*	*90*	*30*	*20*	*20*	*10*	*10*	*90*	*20*	*15*	*15*	*10*	*10*	*70*	*10*	*10*	*10*	***280***
1. Pirelli Cinturato WeatherActive	**30**	**20**	19	**10**	**10**	**89**	29	19	19	**10**	**10**	87	18	10	13	7	6	54	8	**10**	8	**256**
2. Michelin CrossClimate2	27	18	**20**	8	7	80	**30**	**20**	**20**	**10**	8	**88**	19	8	**15**	7	8	57	8	9	9	**251**
3. Bridgestone WeatherPeak	27	18	15	8	9	77	25	18	15	6	7	71	**20**	**15**	14	**10**	**10**	**69**	7	**10**	**10**	**244**
4. Goodyear Assurance WeatherReady	29	19	17	8	7	80	29	**20**	17	9	9	84	16	11	13	8	4	52	8	**10**	8	**242**
5. Nokian Remedy WRG5	28	18	18	**10**	6	80	18	14	18	4	5	59	17	10	14	7	7	55	**10**	**10**	8	**222**

These are subjective categories; all others are calculated from the tires' price, warranty, and/or test results.

A DIGEST OF TESTS, UNFETTERED OPINIONS, AND SOME INTERESTING MINUTIAE

Drivelines

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SIMARI

Speak Softly and Carry a Big Six

Ram 1500 RHO **HIGHS:** Costs less than a TRX, quiet and smooth highway manners, shares the TRX's love of getting dirty. **LOWS:** Negligible fuel-economy gains, slower than the TRX, former chest-beating exhaust roar now a purr. **VERDICT:** A balanced package with bona fide off-road chops yet still destined to live in the shadow of a legend.

Scan the QR code or go to caranddriver.com/reviews for more of our new-vehicle evaluations.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE off-road pickups aren't exactly known for discretion. Intimidation comes naturally to these inexplicably lovable brutes. Take, for instance, the departed Ram 1500 TRX. The direct predecessor of the truck you see here, the 2025 Ram 1500 RHO, the TRX had a brazen stance and a 702-hp supercharged 6.2-liter V-8 with a roid-ravaged wail that elicited adulation and derision in equal measure. Wallflowers need not apply.

But, for a confluence of reasons too lengthy to go into here, the TRX's raucous blown V-8—

Once cleared by the tower, the Ram 1500 RHO settles into a glide path. The RHO's plush, tech-laden interior is a great place to spend time while the 35-inch tires and long-travel suspension do all the dirty work.

popularly known, of course, as the Hellcat—has been replaced by a kinder, gentler twin-turbocharged 3.0-liter inline-six dubbed the Hurricane. Here in its most powerful form, the Hurricane produces 540 horsepower and 521 pound-feet of torque. That's down 162 ponies and 129 pound-feet from the late, great V-8, but the six puts all the torque to work at a very accessible 3500 rpm, a full 1300 rpm lower than the V-8 it replaces.

As a side benefit, the aluminum-block six is lighter than the iron-block V-8 that formerly resided within the frame rails. On our scales, the RHO weighed in at 6541 pounds, 240 less than our long-term TRX.

Based on the presence of fewer cylinders and modern sophistications such as direct fuel injection, we hoped the sensible six would yield some supernatural gains in fuel economy, but we averaged just 11 mpg—4 mpg less than the RHO's 15-mpg EPA combined estimate. Actually, it matches the number we observed over 40,000 miles with the TRX.

But here's one place where the new math works: Despite its power deficit, the lighter engine frees up some capacity in the gross combined weight rating, allowing the RHO to tow up to 8380 pounds, 280 more than the TRX.

No amount of resourceful number crunching, however, can overcome the inherent characteristics of a mechanical ventriculocordectomy of sorts. With only three exhaust pulses per crankshaft revolution to the V-8's four, an inline-six will never match the deep thunder of a V-8. There's more to this sonic conundrum, involving harmonics and physics stuff, but know that the sound emitted from the dual tips of the RHO-specific exhaust system resembles a silken purr rather than the menacing roar of the departed TRX's V-8.

RHO
NW
33°F
0 MPH
1°
2°
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
TEMP
C
P
183 mi
FUEL
4WD LOW
F
E

Drivelines

Most of the RHO's other key attributes—dimensions, chassis, drive modes, rolling stock, and smaller details—carry over with far fewer concessions. Unequal-length control arms provide 13.0 inches of front-wheel travel, while an axle located by four trailing links and a Panhard rod delivers 14.0 inches at the rear. Grip comes courtesy of 35-inch Goodyear Wrangler Territory AT tires. Ram engineers say the software for the drive modes and suspension is nearly identical, though the team tweaked the programming specifically for the RHO.

It all works as intended. The RHO makes no comfort concessions in urban driving, and highway travel is remarkably refined. It's luxury-car silent inside, measuring 66 decibels at 70 mph, four decibels quieter than the TRX. It'll cruise all day at 85 mph, with lane discipline that belies its big off-road rubber and long-travel suspension. This truck even pulled 0.72 g on the skidpad while displaying only moderate understeer, and it stopped from 70 mph in 190 feet, besting the 0.66 g and 195 feet we logged in the TRX.

As for what really matters, the RHO charged to 60 mph in 4.4 seconds and cleared the quarter-mile in 13.1 seconds at 104 mph. That's 0.6 second off the TRX's 3.8-second 60-mph time and 0.7 slower in the quarter than the TRX, which managed 12.4 seconds at 110 mph. On the upside, the RHO is quicker than the last Ford F-150 Raptor we tested. That truck's 450-hp twin-turbo 3.5-liter V-6 propelled it to 60 mph in 5.2 seconds and through the quarter-mile in 13.9 seconds. The departure of the TRX means Ford's 720-hp F-150 Raptor R is now the king of internal-combustion pickups.

So, the RHO lacks the intense acceleration of the TRX, but it's still fiercely competent in the dirt. At the Rouch World off-road park in Sturgis, Michigan, the RHO floated over large, hard-packed whoops at 35 mph without troubling the suspension or eliciting interior rattles. It casually and controllably dropped down and climbed up slimy 34-degree grades without the need to lock the rear differential or even select low range. It endured numerous Apollo-grade splashdowns in over two feet of water without dampening

Ram says the RHO can ford water with a depth of up to 32.0 inches, and we have little reason to doubt that claim.

BILSTEIN
RAM
ACTIVE TERRAIN DYNAMICS
WRANGLER
GOODYEAR

A 540-hp twin-turbo 3.0-liter inline-six fills the space once occupied by a 707-hp 6.2-liter V-8 with a 2.4-liter supercharger.

the carpets or triggering an engine misfire. And jumps, the de facto YouTube measure by which all off-road trucks are ultimately judged, are felt as mere imperfections on the trail, thanks to the supple Bilstein Black Hawk e2 adaptive dampers and the software that controls them.

"Balance" is not a word commonly associated with pickups, let alone off-road-focused models. But the RHO feels like a TRX that went on a spiritual retreat and now embraces the concept of Zen. That newfound enlightenment brings an appreciation of the yin and the yang. And so, with the loss of two cylinders and 162 horsepower, the price drops to $71,990—a significant $26,345 less than the TRX it replaces. That's a holistic wellness idea we can get behind. *—Andrew Wendler*

2025 RAM 1500 RHO

Vehicle Type: front-engine, 4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door pickup **Base/As Tested:** $71,990/$84,420 **Engine:** twin-turbocharged and intercooled 24-valve inline-6, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 183 in^3, 2993 cm^3 **Power:** 540 hp @ 5700 rpm **Torque:** 521 lb-ft @ 3500 rpm **Transmission:** 8-speed automatic **Wheelbase:** 145.1 in **L/W/H:** 233.7/88.0/81.9 in ***C/D*** **Curb Weight:** 6541 lb

TEST RESULTS

60 mph	4.4 sec
100 mph	11.7 sec
1/4-Mile	13.1 sec @ 104 mph

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.4 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	5.8 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd)	119 mph
Braking, 70–0 mph	190 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	0.72 g

FUEL ECONOMY

C/D **Observed**	11 mpg
EPA Combined	15 mpg

Gimme a Big Benz, with Everything

Mercedes-AMG S63 E Performance
HIGHS: Great performance, satisfying chassis, ritzy interior. **LOWS:** Slurred throttle response, small trunk, big price.

With 791 horses at the ready, the S63 should get even the busiest exec to their next meeting in a hurry.

SPEND SOME TIME in America's high-dollar zip codes, and you'll see plenty of Mercedes vehicles sporting AMG badges. Some are genuine AMG models; others are cosplaying with the AMG appearance package. Aside from a few hard acceleration runs, the full-on AMGs probably lead sedate lives. AMG buyers are likely more interested in getting a loaded Mercedes with the highest number on the trunk than experiencing the performance potential of their cars. Luxury automakers happily encourage this thinking.

As cynical as this may sound, there is no doubt that the full-on AMG models, such as the Mercedes-AMG S63 E Performance, deliver genuine speed and thrills. In this case, that starts with 791 total horsepower thanks to a 603-hp twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8 paired with a nine-speed automatic, plus a 188-hp electric motor coupled to the rear axle through its own two-speed gearbox. Total system torque is a massive 1055 pound-feet sent to all four wheels.

This is enough to hurl the 5877-pound, 210.1-inch-long sedan to 60 mph in just 2.6 seconds and through the quarter-mile in 10.8 seconds at 129 mph. In Sport+ mode, the ordinarily crisp shifts are even firmer, and the energized exhaust channels a slightly muffled NASCAR stocker.

The only way to get a big sedan capable of greater thrust is with a high-end Lucid Air, Porsche Taycan, or Tesla Model S. While those EVs and the

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC URBANO

Put your feet up. After all, you've had a busy day creating shareholder value.

2025 MERCEDES-AMG S63 E PERFORMANCE

Vehicle Type: front-engine, rear-motor, all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan **Base/As Tested:** $187,350/$218,610 **Engine:** twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 32-valve 4.0-liter V-8, 603 hp, 664 lb-ft **Motor:** AC, 188 hp, 236 lb-ft **Combined Output:** 791 hp, 1055 lb-ft **Transmissions, F/R:** 9-speed automatic/ 2-speed automatic **Battery Pack:** liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 10.4 kWh **Onboard Charger:** 3.7 kW **Wheelbase:** 126.6 in **L/W/H:** 210.1/75.6/59.6 in ***C/D* Curb Weight:** 5877 lb

TEST RESULTS

60 mph	2.6 sec
100 mph	6.6 sec
1/4-Mile	10.8 sec @ 129 mph
130 mph	11.0 sec
150 mph	15.3 sec

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.2 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	3.6 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd)	180 mph
Braking, 70–0/100–0 mph	161/330 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	0.96 g

C/D FUEL ECONOMY

Observed	16 MPGe

EPA FUEL ECONOMY

Combined	18 mpg
Combined Gas + Electricity	49 MPGe
EV Range	16 mi

S63 must be in their highest performance modes to deliver maximum acceleration, the electrics retain responsiveness in all modes, something missing from the Benz in its lesser modes. That's because when the S63 is in Comfort mode, its V-8 turns off at a stop. When it begins moving again, it does so on electric power alone. That works fine in gentle driving, but if you demand more acceleration, the gas engine has to fire up and build boost before the car moves with vigor.

The S63 perks up considerably in Sport and Sport+. And there's plenty of electric assist from the 10.4-kWh battery, which is large enough to motivate the S63 by electrons alone, albeit only for an EPA-estimated 16 miles. Once the EV range is used up, the car operates as a typical hybrid, occasionally shutting off the engine to maximize efficiency, even on the highway.

If the throttle response is a bit wanting, the S63's chassis fully lives up to its AMG billing. The steering is alive with feedback and provides sharp response. Thanks to virtually imperceptible help from the rear axle, the car feels smaller than it is. The S63's Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tires cling to the skidpad at 0.96 g, and this AMG dives into corners eagerly on back roads yet also provides great on-center stability on the highway. Brake feel is also decent, though pedal effort could be higher. Equipped with the optional carbon-ceramic brakes ($8950), the S63 stops from 70 mph in an impressive (for this car's weight) 161 feet and from 100 mph in 330.

This chassis responsiveness does not come at the expense of comfort, as the S63's well-controlled ride is never harsh. Even when the suspension tightens in Sport and Sport+, the car rides reasonably well. It is an S-class, after all, although you feel and hear tar strips and pavement slabs more than in its less aggressive brethren.

Befitting an S-class, the cabin is large and sumptuous. The front seats were supremely comfortable—once we disabled the active inflatable side bolsters that irritatingly pressed into our ribs at every hint of a corner.

The cavernous rear compartment is elaborately tailored and in our S63 had options totaling $11,000. These included highly adjustable individual seats with separate video screens and climate controls. The passenger's-side one even has a power-folding leg rest. A private jet could do worse.

Such a fancy rear cabin seems a bit odd for a driver-focused AMG model. And it's slightly mismatched with only 11 cubic feet of cargo space.

But this combination of explosive performance and maximum luxury does support the "loaded" mindset. This S63 E Performance's $187,350 starting price inflated to $218,610 with options. Pretty loaded, we'd say. *—Csaba Csere*

Uncaged Tiger

Porsche 718 Spyder RS **HIGHS:** Howls like a werewolf, light as a soufflé, somehow still comfortable. **LOWS:** No manual available, nose lift is a must, enrichment doesn't come cheap.

ANIMALS IN THE ZOO get bored. Their instincts grow dull, and the sparkle leaves their eyes. So, zookeepers have enrichment programs: exercises and puzzles to sharpen skills and claws. If you've been feeling like a captive tiger in the cage of your boring daily driver, Porsche's 718 Spyder RS is enrichment for humans. Everything about it, from revving its scintillating flat-six to its 9000-rpm redline to snapping its clever manual top into place, reinvigorates your spirit. The bears and elephants will be jealous. The Spyder elicits human envy too, because even though it sounds ferocious and shares DNA with track monsters such as the Cayman GT4 RS and the 911 GT3 RS, it's a street-friendly sweetheart.

This is the first Boxster-based RS model, with all the lightweight and race-inspired components those initials promise. The Spyder shares its operatic powerplant, seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission, adaptive dampers, and available carbon-ceramic brakes with the Cayman GT4 RS. But whereas the RS'd Cayman is track focused, the Spyder makes concessions to street comfort. With the dampers in Normal mode, the most uncomfortable aspect of the Spyder RS is hoisting your hindquarters over the seats' prominent—and hard—side bolsters.

While it's tamer than a GT4 RS, the Spyder is far beyond a base 718 Boxster. It sits 2.0 inches lower, so you'll need the optional front-axle lift ($3040), and its front and rear tracks are wider. The springs and dampers are softer than the GT4's, and the anti-roll bars and ride height are adjustable. Add a set of Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires to the mix, and the Spyder sticks to the pavement like a fried egg on unseasoned cast iron.

The 493-hp 4.0-liter flat-six has dry-sump lubrication, solid lifters, and individual throttle

Any grumbling about the RS's lack of a manual transmission will be drowned out by the scream of the flat-six, a balm to the wild creatures.

PORSCHE PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC URBANO

bodies—it's designed to rev fast and stay at high rpm for as long as you have the nerve to keep the pedal down. Guiding this car out of a curve and onto a straight while slinging the needle up the tach is so involving and gratifying that you might not even miss a manual option.

The carbon-fiber-reinforced-plastic hood and front fenders save mass. Porsche also reduced sound-deadening materials, ditched the headlight washers, and even replaced the traditional badge on the hood with a sticker to shave a few precious grams. The automaker claims you can eliminate another 22 pounds by speccing the Weissach package ($12,570) and the magnesium wheels ($15,640). Our test car had it all and weighed in at 3167 pounds.

The cabin gets slimmed-down carpets and door panels but still boasts leather and microsuede. Skip the optional Bose stereo ($990); the engine drowns it out. If Sherlock Holmes had heard the howl of a 718 Spyder RS echoing across the moors, he would have hightailed it for London and left the Baskervilles to their fate.

The manual soft top is another weight saver. Porsche says not to exceed 124 mph with the top up but claims 191-mph capability with it down. In our testing, the Spyder hit 60 mph in 2.8 seconds, vanquished the quarter-mile in 10.9 at 127 mph, and held tight to the skidpad for 1.05 g's with just a smidgen of understeer.

The $211,090 as-tested price is about the only heavy thing on this Spyder RS. But your inner tiger will never be bored again. —*Elana Scherr*

2024 PORSCHE 718 SPYDER RS

Vehicle Type: mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door convertible **Base/As Tested:** $163,650/$211,090 **Engine:** DOHC 24-valve flat-6, aluminum block and heads, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 244 in^3, 3996 cm^3 **Power:** 493 hp @ 8400 rpm **Torque:** 331 lb-ft @ 6750 rpm **Transmission:** 7-speed dual-clutch automatic **Wheelbase:** 97.7 in **L/W/H:** 173.9/71.7/49.3 in ***C/D* Curb Weight:** 3167 lb

TEST RESULTS

60 mph	2.8 sec
100 mph	6.6 sec
1/4-Mile	10.9 sec @ 127 mph
130 mph	11.6 sec
150 mph	17.0 sec

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.2 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	3.6 sec
Top Speed (mfr claim)	191 mph
Braking, 70–0/100–0 mph	147/290 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	1.05 g

FUEL ECONOMY

***C/D* Observed**	17 mpg
EPA Combined	16 mpg

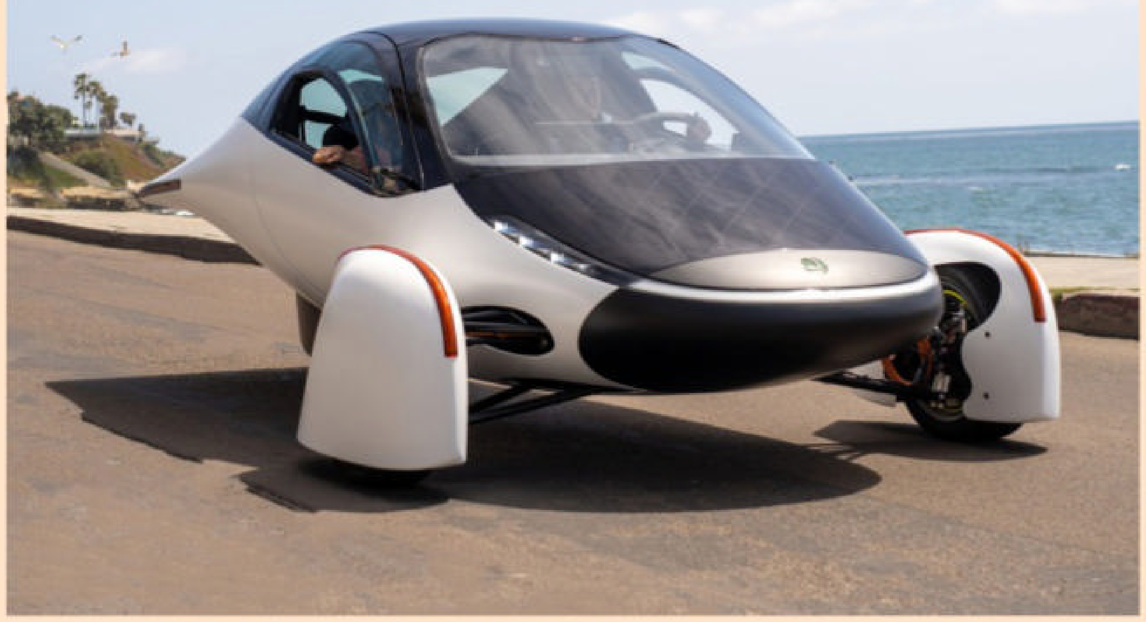
Nineteen years later, the Aptera tripod EV just might have legs.

APTERA HAS HAD a tumultuous existence. The California startup emerged in 2006 but fizzled out in 2011. Revived in 2019, the company aims to start production of its EV by the end of this year, largely through crowdfunding.

Classified as an autocycle or a motorcycle, depending on the state where it's registered, this three-wheeled vehicle has the potential to shake up the EV world. That is, if Aptera's claims prove true. The teardrop shape creates a claimed drag coefficient of 0.13. A carbon-fiber, two-seat body atop an aluminum chassis affords a stated curb weight of 2200 pounds. The combination of slippery aerodynamics and lightweight design means the puny 42.0-kWh battery pack manages to provide a claimed 400 miles of range.

But the Aptera's true party trick is the solar panels covering its body. Aptera says they can add up to 40 miles of range per day in sunny climates. An Aptera owner with an average driving commute might only need to plug in briefly, if at all.

After riding in a prototype, we can confirm the Aptera feels less odd than it looks. The front-mounted motor's 201 horsepower makes the svelte tripod zippy in urban traffic. The ride is firm but not uncivilized. The interior build quality still needs work, but if Aptera can get production started, the three-wheeler could fill a niche for EV shoppers unable to plug in at home. —*Caleb Miller*



Small Sedan of Serious Substance

The **Audi S3** gets some upgrades under the skin, where it counts.

New vents, additional interior lighting, and a new toggle shifter are the big changes inside the S3.

THERE'S SHOW, and then there's go. The refreshed Audi S3 has both, although you'd be hard-pressed to see the show.

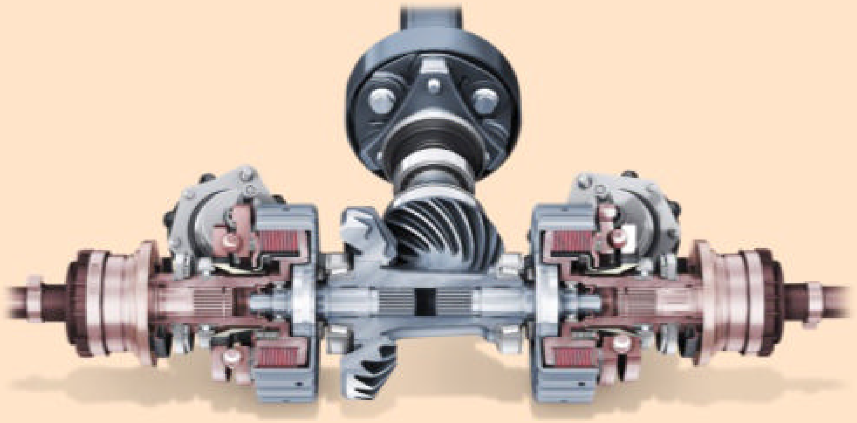
Exterior changes for 2025 are limited to fine details. The headlights and taillights have slightly altered appearances, the grille has a new body-colored surround, and the rear diffuser is more pronounced. Interior revisions are equally subtle, with updated cabin lighting and a new shifter among the more notable.

We're more interested in the changes that bolster performance. They start under the hood, where the turbocharged 2.0-liter four gets a 22-hp boost to 328 horses, plus 295 pound-feet of torque. A new anti-lag feature keeps the throttle plate open to allow air to move through the turbo during off-throttle events, increasing the response when you press the accelerator. A seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transaxle sends torque to all four wheels, and Audi claims full-throttle upshifts are approximately 50 percent quicker.

The biggest equipment upgrade bolts between the rear wheels in the form of a new torque-vectoring rear differential pilfered from the RS3 and Volkswagen Golf R. It can send all available rear-axle torque to either corner. Routing it to the outside rear wheel in turns reduces understeer, making the S3 feel more lively and playful.

On a diabolical squiggle of pavement inland from Oceanside, California, these upgrades combined to make the S3 a more entertaining and capable canyon killer. Our route was marked by small rises and gullies coupled with twists and turns, and the S3 sliced through the curves with deft precision. At the top of the rises, the car got light as the suspension stretched out, giving us a fun little bunny hop as we nudged the steering wheel into the next bend. Feeding in some steering lock as we entered a hairpin turn made the

075M580
MANUFACTURER



The torque-vectoring rear differential can send up to 100 percent of the available grunt to either side.

tail end rotate around slightly. The action of the rear differential, though, isn't obvious, which is exactly as it should be.

The Drive Select button calls up Dynamic mode, but unlocking the new Dynamic Plus setting requires an additional onscreen tap to confirm that you want the full performance potential. This verification also adds a sense of occasion.

Launch control becomes available in the Dynamic Plus setting. To activate it, you mash both pedals and then release the brake for send-off, but we didn't get the catapult effect we were expecting. Thankfully, simply stomping on the accelerator gives plenty of giddyap. Audi says the S3 will reach 60 mph in 4.4 seconds, 0.1 quicker than before. We saw 4.3 seconds with the previous S3, so this version should be able to close in on 4.0.

All of this is fun, but the S3 is also a great ride around town. It's not the least bit harsh over bumps, and although there's a fair degree of road noise, the cabin is otherwise quiet. And the S3's tidy dimensions make parking easy enough that you don't need to rely on the sensors or cameras.

The 2025 Audi S3 starts at $49,995 for the base Premium trim. That's $1500 more than last year's S3, but considering the improvements, it's a relative bargain. That price also looks good against competing sports sedans. It just undercuts the BMW M235 Gran Coupe and is far less costly than the Mercedes-AMG CLA35. The front-wheel-drive Acura Integra Type S is also pricier, though it offers the extra involvement of a manual transmission.

The S3 was already a desirable compact four-door, and the changes only add to the appeal. It's a sophisticated little sports sedan that still delivers thrills aplenty. —*Mark Takahashi*

2025 AUDI S3
Vehicle Type: front-engine, all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan **Base:** $49,995 **Engine:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve inline-4, iron block and aluminum head, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 121 in^3, 1984 cm^3 **Power:** 328 hp @ 6500 rpm **Torque:** 295 lb-ft @ 2000 rpm **Transmission:** 7-speed dual-clutch automatic **Wheelbase:** 103.6 in **L/W/H:** 177.4/71.5/55.7 in **Curb Weight (*C/D* est):** 3600 lb **PERFORMANCE (*C/D* EST) 60 mph:** 4.1 sec **100 mph:** 10.3 sec **1/4-Mile:** 12.6 sec **Top Speed:** 155 mph **EPA Fuel Economy Combined:** 26 mpg

The Mercedes-Benz CLA-class is a "mild-plus" hybrid.

YOUR AVERAGE 48-volt hybrid isn't very aspirational. These systems are limited in scope, meant to extend stop-start use and allow for some occasional engine-off coasting. But the upcoming Mercedes-Benz CLA-class aims to blur the lines between 48-volt so-called mild hybrids and more traditional hybrids.

The CLA's powertrain arrangement starts with a new gas engine. The M252 is a turbocharged 1.5-liter inline-four running the more efficient Miller cycle, which closes the intake valves early to reduce losses and increase efficiency.

Mercedes mates the M252 to a 27-hp electric motor, which, along with the inverter, is integrated inside the eight-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission. A small lithium-ion battery stores the juice. Final specs aren't out yet, but Mercedes says the CLA hybrid will make a combined 188 horsepower.

How is this different from 48-volt hybrids that came before? Simply put, Mercedes wants its tech to break free of the word "mild." In addition to engine-off coasting and stop-start stuff, the CLA hybrid will be capable of very limited electric-only operation (such as traffic jams and other slow-roll situations). It's closer to a traditional hybrid (think Toyota Prius) than other 48-volters.

Regeneration is also more robust than in your average mild hybrid, and a new brake-pedal module prioritizes that energy recuperation whenever possible.

We took a brief spin at Benz's winter testing ground in Sweden, and it seems the company is on to something. The engine remained off for longer than any mild hybrid we can think of, and that new brake module provided seamless blending between friction and regenerative braking. When it was time for the engine to kick in, we barely noticed the handoff. We also proved the all-wheel-drive CLA can rip some sick snowy drifts. Mercedes is cookin' with gas and has concocted something spicier than mild. —*Andrew Krok*

Strident Trident

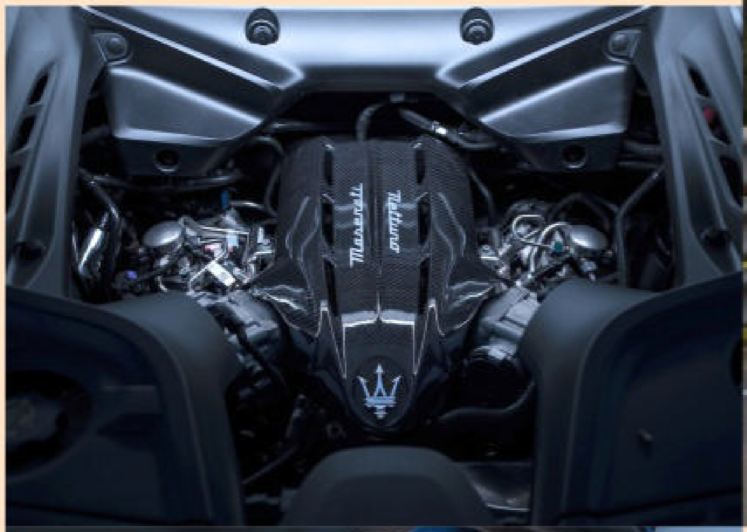
An homage to the GT2 race car, the **Maserati GT2 Stradale** needs more punch behind its promise.

TODAY'S MASERATI IS OFTEN thought of more as a luxury brand, but for many years it built dedicated race cars, competing successfully in Formula 1 in the 1950s and carrying Juan Manuel Fangio to notable wins. Maserati's rivalry with Enzo Ferrari set up the first act of Michael Mann's *Ferrari*. And the 111-year-old automaker continues to dabble in motorsports, building and selling race cars based on the MC20 for the GT2 European Series. To celebrate this endeavor, Maserati is offering the roadgoing GT2 Stradale based on the MC20.

Limited to 914 examples worldwide, the Stradale applies some elements of the race car, but most of the bits carry over from the MC20, including the carbon-fiber tub, the aluminum subframes (front and rear), the suspension arms, and the eight-speed dual-clutch transaxle. Even the twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6, with its novel pre-chamber ignition, is the same as the regular MC20's, save a token 10-hp bump to 631 horses.

Suspension changes are as you'd expect with a racier variant. The springs are 8 percent stiffer in the front and 10 percent stiffer in the rear, with recalibrated electronically controlled dampers to match. Downforce is up, a lot. The regular MC20 creates 320 pounds of downforce at 174 mph, and the Stradale more than triples that figure, thanks to fender vents and a reworked underbody and diffuser, plus a carbon-fiber rear wing, extended spoiler, and S-duct-style front end that eliminates the MC20's frunk. Maserati claims the center-lock aluminum wheels save a combined 42 pounds over the MC20's wheels.

Matte Digital Aurora paint blends a blue base coat with a translucent red layer, creating an attention-drawing blue-purple-red gradient in direct light.



The GT2 Stradale's seat (left) isn't the most comfortable road-car carbon-fiber bucket, but it holds tight on track. The harness is part of an option package the U.S. doesn't get.

The intercooler and air intakes on each fender look like they actively grab the passing air, rather than merely letting Bernoulli and gravity pull it in. They're much larger because Maserati positioned the air-to-air heat exchangers more vertically to increase their efficacy by 20 percent—deemed necessary for the track, where heat soak can, well, soak up the fun.

The cocoon-like cabin lacks carpet, putting the exposed structural tub on display. And while Alcantara covers more surfaces than in a regular MC20, Maserati used a thinner (thus lighter) version of the faux suede to keep weight down, but enough is there to help with interior noise abatement. Standard carbon-fiber buckets do an excellent job of keeping you in place at the expense of comfort in traffic. The regular MC20 seats are available as a no-cost substitution.

Collectors will no doubt pursue the $13,750 Performance pack. It swaps Bridgestone Potenza Sport tires for Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2Rs and slightly upsizes the carbon-ceramic rotors. The increase is so small that the larger brake hardware uses the same calipers. Arguably, the most significant feature of the package is an electronically controlled limited-slip differential that managed grip very well at corner exit with not a whiff of wheelspin.

The Performance pack also brings additional drive modes, which are set up very much like GM's Performance Traction Management. There's Wet, GT, Sport, and Corsa for all Stradales, but the Performance pack unlocks a graduated series of Corsa Evo modes (4, 3, 2, and 1) that eventually disables all the stability nannies.

Despite the various weight-saving measures, the GT2 Stradale is but a claimed 132 pounds lighter than the MC20, meaning it weighs at least 3600 pounds. Acceleration to 60 mph should be just a hair over three seconds, and the Stradale will go 201 mph if given the room.

So, a little less weight and about the same horsepower for a roughly $80,000 premium? This is the question many a Maserati salesperson will face when trying to move the $313,995 GT2 Stradale. When you add GT2 to the name of a car, buyers expect big power or greatly reduced weight. Better yet, big power *and* greatly reduced weight. The Stradale doesn't check either box. It's more nimble, with the Michelins providing some mega grip in corners, but its steering, while accurate, is a bit numb as it loads up under cornering pressure. The brakes are powerful but touchy, and the transmission shifts with awkward jolts. It's fun and lovely to look at, but that's not enough when the competition looks good and provides more performance and a better driving experience.

The last time Porsche made a GT2, it added 160 horses to a 911 Turbo. Mercedes-AMG federalized a ballistic missile with the 720-hp GT Black Series. Sure, the Merc didn't have a 2 in its name, but it might as well have. Unless you already have a garage filled with trident-wearing racers from the '50s and '60s, you may be back at the dealership asking about the power that Maserati left out. *—K.C. Colwell*

2025 MASERATI GT2 STRADALE
Vehicle Type: mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door coupe **Base:** $313,995
Engine: twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve V-6, aluminum block and heads, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 183 in^3, 2992 cm^3 **Power:** 631 hp @ 7500 rpm
Torque: 531 lb-ft @ 3000 rpm **Transmission:** 8-speed dual-clutch automatic
Wheelbase: 106.3 in **L/W/H:** 183.8/77.4/48.1 in **Curb Weight (*C/D* est):** 3600 lb
PERFORMANCE (*C/D* EST) 60 mph: 3.1 sec **100 mph:** 6.4 sec **1/4-Mile:** 10.9 sec
Top Speed: 201 mph **EPA Fuel Economy (*C/D* est) Combined:** 18 mpg

Drivelines

Maybe it's our imagination, but the three-diamond logo on the Outlander's prow is the biggest we've ever seen. The glam continues on the inside.

Ship's Shape

The pride of the Japanese automaker's humble fleet, the **Mitsubishi Outlander** gets some modest upgrades.

THE TERM "FLAGSHIP" usually conjures images of an elegant sedan or a fetching two-seat roadster. But things are a bit different over at Mitsubishi. The Japanese automaker considers its flagship to be the Outlander, a compact SUV that competes in the most mainstream segment there is. The Outlander is also Mitsubishi's bestseller, which explains why the company is boasting about all the small changes that add up to a mid-cycle refresh.

Last redesigned for 2022, the Outlander looks decent inside and out. It offers a relatively advanced plug-in-hybrid powertrain with more electric range than many rivals, but the base engine is an aging Nissan four-cylinder paired with a continuously variable automatic transmission.

The update includes revised styling, additional standard features, suspension tweaks, more sound deadening, and new audio systems by Yamaha, with up to 12 speakers and 1650 watts. Those changes are for base-engine 2025 Outlanders; the plug-in-hybrid version gets them next model year.

The Outlander's face may be polarizing, but the look is distinctive. The extra chrome and 20-inch wheels found on most trims give the Mitsu a glitzier design than a Toyota RAV4 or a Honda CR-V. We drove an SEL with the Premium package, and the cabin's plushness—with soft-touch dashboard materials, quilted leather upholstery, and knurled switchgear—is a good match for its aspirational styling. We'd rate this SUV's accommodations near the top of its class.

The Outlander has one other ace up its sleeve: standard seven-passenger seating. The Volkswagen Tiguan dropped its third-row option for 2025, making the Outlander the only mainstream compact SUV that can seat seven, although the wayback is strictly for small fry, and even then, expect some grousing. Thankfully, the second row is plenty comfortable for adults.

The Outlander's ordinary driving demeanor pairs well with its comfy interior. Traveling at a reasonable pace, we found it quiet and refined by this segment's standards. We couldn't really notice the changes to the dampers, spring rates, and bushings, but the additional sound deadening seemed to be doing its job. As before, the Mitsu is no handling maestro; its mushy brake pedal and vague steering don't engender confidence when you push the SUV at more aggressive speeds on twisty roads.

But will you even reach aggressive speeds? Whereas its Nissan Rogue sibling has adopted a turbocharged three-cylinder with variable-compression-ratio tech, the Outlander chugs along with a naturally aspirated 2.5-liter four. Its 181 horsepower isn't much in an SUV of this size, and the engine has to work hard to get the Outlander up to freeway speeds.

The starting price, at just over $31,000, looks reasonable, but it's tough to justify the high-end models that reach $40K and beyond. For that money, we'd be looking at more powerful competitors such as the Mazda CX-50. The Outlander may be the finest schooner in Mitsu's fleet, but there are other ships in the sea. —*Joey Capparella*

2025 MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER
Vehicle Type: front-engine, front- or all-wheel-drive, 7-passenger, 4-door wagon **Base:** $31,535–$33,335 **Engine:** DOHC 16-valve inline-4, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 152 in^3, 2488 cm^3 **Power:** 181 hp @ 6000 rpm **Torque:** 181 lb-ft @ 3600 rpm **Transmission:** continuously variable automatic **Wheelbase:** 106.5 in **L/W/H:** 185.8/74.7/68.7–68.8 in **Curb Weight (*C/D* est):** 3650–3800 lb **PERFORMANCE (*C/D* EST) 60 mph:** 8.2–8.4 sec **1/4-Mile:** 16.4–16.6 sec **Top Speed:** 120 mph **EPA Fuel Economy Combined:** 26–27 mpg

Big-Rig Energy

Nissan Armada Pro-4X **HIGHS:** Plenty quick, spacious and quiet cabin, better ride quality than the larger-wheel variants. **LOWS:** Indecisive transmission, steering feels artificial, engine clatter at idle.

TO BE A LEGITIMATE PLAYER in the full-size-SUV game, you need an off-road trim level. That's something Nissan's Armada previously didn't have. But now the company is giving the all-new body-on-frame Armada the Pro-4X treatment to contend with the competition's mudslinging rigs.

The hulking Armada Pro-4X has major curb presence. At a towering 80.1 inches with the standard air springs at full mast, it's nearly as tall as Shaquille O'Neal. Its chiseled fascia, burnished with Lava Red recovery hooks seemingly ready to pull a freighter out of Lake Superior, affords it an approach angle of 33.0 degrees. A break-over angle of 25.5 degrees, a 24.5-degree departure angle, and 9.6 inches of ground clearance are all measurements at or near the head of the class. This is also the only Armada fitted with fender cladding, all-terrain tires, and an electronically locking rear differential.

Pour one out for another V-8 death: Nissan's 5.6-liter. Now a twin-turbo 3.5-liter V-6 churns out 425 horsepower and 516 pound-feet of torque, respective gains of 24 and 103. Nissan's nine-speed automatic transmission now swaps the ratios. It constantly shuffles gears and can't seem to stop upshifting and downshifting at highway speeds.

Nissan tuned this V-6 to run on regular gas, so it's down 25 horses to its luxury stablemate, the Infiniti QX80, which slurps premium. Yet at the track, the 6085-pound Pro-4X sped to 60 mph in 5.9 seconds and covered the quarter-mile in 14.4 seconds at 98 mph, 0.2 and 0.1 second quicker than the 406-pound-heavier QX.

2025 NISSAN ARMADA PRO-4X
Vehicle Type: front-engine, 4-wheel-drive, 8-passenger, 4-door wagon **Base/As Tested:** \$75,750/\$80,445 **Engine:** twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve V-6, aluminum block and heads, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 213 in^3, 3492 cm^3 **Power:** 425 hp @ 5600 rpm **Torque:** 516 lb-ft @ 3600 rpm **Transmission:** 9-speed automatic **Wheelbase:** 121.1 in **L/W/H:** 209.6/80.0/75.2–80.1 in ***C/D* Curb Weight:** 6085 lb

TEST RESULTS

60 mph	5.9 sec
1/4-Mile	14.4 sec @ 98 mph
100 mph	15.0 sec

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	6.9 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd)	123 mph
Braking, 70–0 mph	175 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	0.77 g

FUEL ECONOMY

***C/D* Observed**	14 mpg
75-mph Hwy Fuel Economy/Range	18 mpg/420 mi
EPA Combined	16 mpg

From the outside, you can hear the idling V-6 clattering like an '80s diesel, but inside the lavish cabin, up to eight occupants will appreciate a hushed 64 decibels at 70 mph. The wheelbase is unchanged, yet the first and third rows gain legroom. The second row sacrifices a couple of inches to open up the third, which gains 4.5 inches.

The ride has some head toss at low speeds, but that's better than the jitters we experienced in higher-trim Armadas and the QX80—smaller wheels for the win. The new electronically assisted steering is a bit heavy but more responsive than the previous hydraulic setup. Despite a soft brake pedal, there's enough stopping power to bring this three-row to a halt from 70 mph in 175 feet.

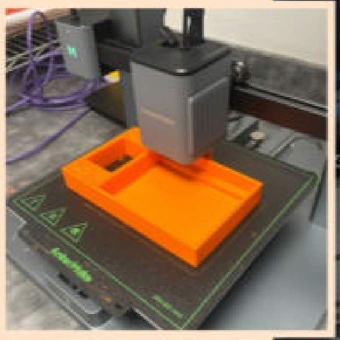
The Pro-4X's \$75,750 base price sounds high, but it's thousands less than the competition, most of which are new or refreshed. Time for a battle of the big rigs. *—David Beard*

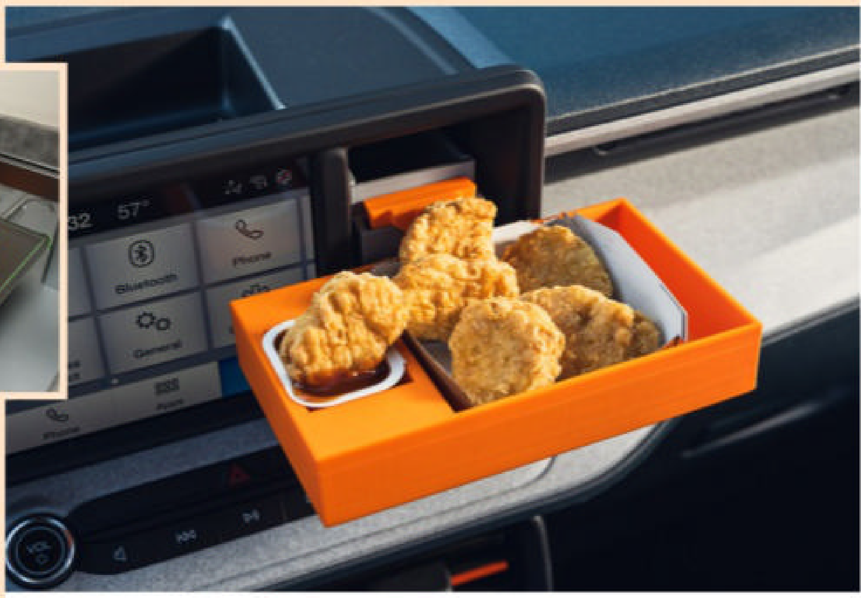
The linebacker-size Nissan Armada hustles through downtown Detroit. Our big greenish-gray test car housed a big dark-gray interior.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC URBANO

Fleeting Thoughts

Updates on the long-term vehicles fortunate enough to spend 40,000 miles with *C/D*'s staff.





2023 Hyundai Ioniq 5

MILES: 28,711
OBSERVED MPGe: 90

Lazarus seems like a good nickname for our long-term Hyundai Ioniq 5, though even he didn't rise from the dead twice. On two separate occasions within the past few months, our Ioniq 5 lost all power to its 12-volt electrical system, effectively bricking the car each time and, in the most recent instance, requiring a flatbed trip to the dealer's service department.

There, two related technical service bulletins were addressed. The first involved the low-voltage limp-home mode and the speeds at which the car can drive with it engaged. A simple software update resolved the issue.

The other was a bit more involved. It concerned a control unit that oversees charging the vehicle's 12-volt system. Certain conditions may cause this control unit to blow an internal fuse, at which point the low-voltage system will no longer charge. A software update resolved our car's recall, but some Ioniq 5s may receive a new electronic control unit too.

So far, the fixes appear to have done the trick, as we've noticed no strange behavior from the 12-volt system since. But then again, we thought the same thing after replacing the Ioniq's 12-volt battery following its first failure.

With the promise of warmer weather around the corner, we are hoping for smoother sailing ahead. And in general, the Ioniq 5 remains a faithful electric companion. Despite some single-digit temperatures eating into estimated range figures and the aforementioned 12-volt woes, the Hyundai performed admirably in its second Midwestern winter. With the odometer past 25,000 miles, the Ioniq 5 was in its final cold season with us, so we made the most of the last bit of snow-covered drifty goodness available before springtime melted away those childish antics.

But our adventures with the Ioniq's telltale heart (the rear liftgate clunk that has never quite gone away) are not yet over. On our next visit to the dealership, we'll see whether the technicians can vanquish that annoyance for good. —*Andrew Krok*

2024 Ford Maverick XLT

MILES: 26,255
OBSERVED MPG: 33

"The Maverick is the vehicle America needs," declares managing news editor Eric Stafford. Clearly, our long-term Ford Maverick XLT hybrid is well liked around *Car and Driver*'s headquarters. You'll find it with mountain bikes draped over its tailgate, a motocross bike strapped in its bed, or a back end full of junk destined for the dump. Sometimes it's just living its life as a daily commuter. It's also spurred us to take up a new hobby.

Unique to the Maverick are the Ford Integrated Tether System (FITS) attachment points. The internet is replete with 3-D-printable files for filling these FITS cleats with cupholders, trash cans, storage dividers, device holders, and more. We are now 3-D-printing enthusiasts. Our first project was a drawer with a FITS mount to fill the otherwise useless cubby next to the infotainment screen. Next, we printed a holder for chicken nuggets and a sauce pack. Now we're dipping and driving in search of the greatest fast-food snacks. By the end of 40,000 miles, this Maverick will be completely bedazzled.

When winter arrived, we mounted a set of Firestone Winterforce 2 UV tires ($695) and pointed the Maverick north into Michigan's first major snowfall of the season. At our remote outpost, we didn't make it very far up the driveway before the Maverick went one-wheel-peel in a parfait of frozen precipitation and sand. All-wheel drive likely would've pushed it that last few hundred feet, but it wasn't an option with the hybrid powertrain when we spec'd our little rig. For 2025, it is.

Part of the Maverick's allure is its fuel-sipping nature. The truck returned 33 mpg in our 75-mph highway test, allowing for up to 450 miles between fill-ups. Heading into winter, nearly every tankful was over 30 mpg, with a 35-mpg average. But with cold temps and higher-rolling-resistance winter tires, we rarely bested 30 mpg, and our overall average dropped to 33 mpg. —*David Beard*

HYUNDAI: MARC URBANO; FORD NUGGETS: MICHAEL SIMARI; 3-D PRINTER: DAVID BEARD; RAM: ANDI HEDRICK

2025 Ram 1500 Big Horn

MILES: 3737
OBSERVED MPG: 14

We're starting to feel like shepherds. This 1500 Big Horn is the sixth Ram 1500 to undergo our long-term test after the recent cushy Limited and the unhinged TRX. So long as the Ram keeps collecting 10Best wins (seven and counting), we'll keep inviting it back.

The biggest change this time is the available straight-six engine that steps in for the previous V-8. The new Hurricane twin-turbo 3.0-liter inline-six ($2695) makes 420 horsepower and 469 pound-feet of torque. We also opted for the Big Horn trim with six seats to match its six cylinders because we liked that symmetry.

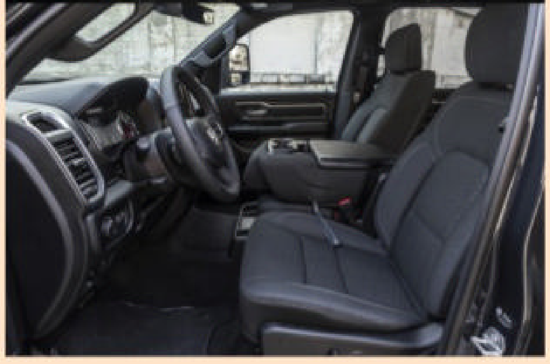
Between hauling race cars to track days, towing snowmobiles to Michigan's frigid Upper Peninsula, and carrying a seemingly endless parade of big-screen TVs from big-box stores, this Ram is making the most of its 1350-pound payload. And our team's appetite for truck utility shows no signs of waning.

We opted for the 33.0-gallon fuel tank ($445) for maximum range, and we're eager to see whether the smaller engine delivers better fuel economy than the 14 mpg we observed with our 2019 Ram 1500 Limited V-8 (so far it hasn't). Both trucks share a 19-mpg EPA combined rating, but this new six-cylinder brings more hustle. Its 4.8 seconds to 60 mph and 13.6-second quarter-mile in our testing beat the V-8 by 1.3 seconds and 1.0 second.

With the Towing Technology Group ($595) and the Trailer-Tow Group ($1345) bringing everything from trailer-tire-pressure monitoring to side mirrors the size of elephant ears, the Ram is well set up for hauling. Opting for the 3.92 rear-axle ratio ($195) clears us to tow up to 10,890 pounds.

The Big Horn Level 2 Equipment Group ($2770) adds amenities such as a 12.0-inch touchscreen and heated front seats but bizarrely doesn't include passive keyless entry. Yes, our $68,320 truck requires manually hitting the unlock button like it's 1995.

Ram interiors have long set the standard for pickup-truck luxury, though it's the leather-lined trims that earned that reputation. We'll see whether the excellence continues in our Big Horn with its cloth seats. We can have up to six critics weigh in on every mile. —*Carlos Lago*



2024 Porsche Macan T

MILES: 4706
OBSERVED MPG: 19

The Porsche Macan has received our 10Best award eight times, yet we've never subjected one to a long-term trial. That's how the pitch for a 40,000-mile test of a 2024 Macan T began. Porsche said yes, so we asked for more: to take delivery at Porsche's Experience Center in Leipzig, Germany. When Porsche said yes to that too, we submitted our order.

If you are willing to wait and want to spec a car like we did, you can get a color like Copper Ruby Metallic ($700 for 2024 but a significantly pricier $2480 for 2025) and pair it with 20-inch bronze-painted wheels (not shown) for an additional $1440. The T adds adaptive dampers and the Sport Chrono package, which bestows launch control. It also comes with eight-way sport seats that have pinstripe fabric inserts. We kept ticking options, the 1000-plus-watt Burmester audio system with 16 speakers being the largest single-ticket item at $5700. It's probably not worth the spend, but it sounds far better than the relatively muddy $990 Bose. European delivery was $1500 but has increased to $2500 for 2025.

Porsche calls for a break-in period of 1875 miles for the 261-hp turbo 2.0-liter four-cylinder and seven-speed dual-clutch automatic. The procedure stipulates varying engine rpm, limiting full-throttle acceleration, and forgoing trips to the 6900-rpm redline, recommendations that are hard to follow when an unrestricted autobahn stretches out in front of you.

After a few days in eastern Germany, we returned the Macan to Porsche for its three-month trip to the States. Once fully broken in, the Macan T hit 60 mph in 5.4 seconds. Its mix of refinement and handling has made its key one of the most fought over in the office. —*Tony Quiroga*

Drivelines: Blips

HIGHLIGHTING THE DETAILS THAT MATTER

SCREAMING PAST INFLATION

The battle against ever-tightening emissions regulations is one that Porsche engineers are keen to win. To that end, the 4.0-liter flat-six in the 2025 (992.2) 911 GT3 delivers the same 502 horsepower and 9000-rpm redline as before, offsetting the exhaust's two additional catalysts with angrier powertrain parts, including throttle bodies and camshafts from the GT3 RS. Torque is down 15 pound-feet, but the final-drive gearing is shorter to compensate. With a host of chassis upgrades, some borrowed from the RS, the latest GT3 is as delightful to drive as its predecessor. The steering is nearly flawless, and the chassis remains griptastic, but daily users will appreciate the extra suspension travel afforded by smaller bump stops. Kids will appreciate that the Touring model now has a rear-seat option. But these upgrades will cost you: The 992.2 GT3's $224,495 base price is some 22 percent higher than the 2024 992.1 model's.

PLATFORM SHOES

Have you lusted after an Acura Integra but wished it was a little taller and more practical? The **Acura ADX** is here to answer that want, sort of. Like the Integra, the ADX rocks a standard turbocharged 1.5-liter four-cylinder engine and front-wheel drive. Unlike the Teggy, though, the ADX offers optional all-wheel drive. We're also sad to report that the Integra's six-speed manual won't be an option on the ADX. Starting at $36,350, a 2025 ADX costs around $2000 to $4000 more than a similarly equipped Integra. We've begun praying for a Type S.

DO IT IN THE ROAD

Because so many EVs, shall we say, struggle to grasp the gilded fronds of automotive character, Volvo is trying this: Abbey Road Studios mode for the Bowers & Wilkins audio system with Dolby Atmos in the new **EX90** electric SUV. Abbey Road mode uses software plug-ins developed by engineers at the studio the Beatles made famous to impart the sonic character of its legendary rooms. In interactive Producer mode, you move the aural reference point around an image of a recording studio, and the tonality and ambience slide from "vintage" to "modern," "intimate" to "live."

MERCS A-POPPIN'

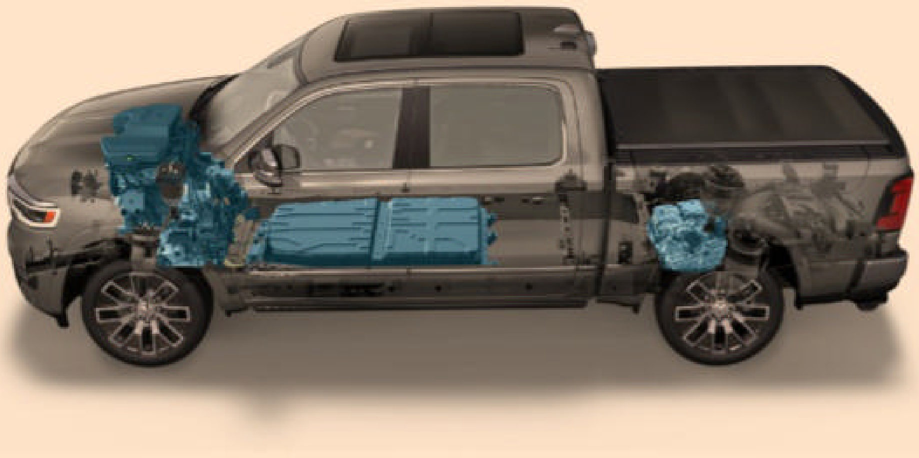
Mercedes is on the verge of some major changes to its lineup. In its annual investor presentation, Benz confirmed that a smaller G-class is on the way to live alongside its big brother. Electric propulsion will finally make its way to the C-class and E-class, and AMG has plans for additional electrified models, as well as a new hybrid V-8. The wheeled-suppository design of the **EQS** (pictured) and EQE should die off soon; instead, EV models will more closely resemble their gas-powered brethren.

RAMCHARGING

In a battery-powered-pickup switcheroo, Ram is delaying the electric REV's arrival and instead releasing the plug-in-hybrid **Ramcharger** first. Its 3.6-liter V-6 is used only as a generator for the 69.7-kWh battery. When the truck has a full charge and a full tank, range is a claimed 690 miles. Built on a new platform, the Ramcharger matches the 1500 crew cab's dimensions. Dual electric motors deliver 647 horsepower and 610 pound-feet, besting the twin-turbo 3.0-liter inline-six's max of 540 horses and 521 pound-feet. At 7500 pounds, the truck is over 1500 pounds heavier than the 2025 1500 Limited we tested. The lone body style is a crew cab with a five-foot, seven-inch bed.

SCAT PACK TESTED

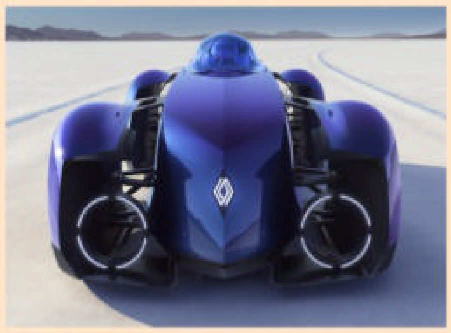
You'll be happy to know that the electric **Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack** can scoot. Its two motors produce a beefy 670 horsepower and 627 pound-feet of torque, all of which were used at the test track. The electric Scat Pack hit 60 mph in 3.3 seconds, punched through the quarter-mile in 11.7 seconds at 119 mph, and managed 0.96 g around the skidpad. The last gas-fed Scat Pack we tested, a 2019 Charger with a naturally aspirated V-8 making 485 horsepower and 475 pound-feet, was a half-second slower



MERCEDES-BENZ: MICHAEL SIMARI; MAP ILLUSTRATION BY PETER SUCHESKI in each sprint. Compare the electric Scat Pack with the most powerful gas-powered Charger, the 797-hp Hellcat Redeye, and the EV's advantage shrinks. The 2021 Redeye we tested hit 60 in 3.5 seconds and passed the quarter-mile in 11.5 seconds at 126 mph.

BIMMER'S BIG BRAIN

The **BMW Vision Driving Experience** and its light-up wheels look sleek, but this concept is more about the brains within. BMW has created a new electronic control unit, the "Heart of Joy," which combines the electronics and software for the drivetrain, brakes, regeneration, charging, and steering into a single entity. It's one of four control modules in the car and reportedly processes inputs 10 times faster than previous systems. BMW also claims that the interconnection of regenerative braking and drivetrain controls can boost efficiency by up to 25 percent, as drivers will not need to rely as heavily on the friction brakes. Let's just hope the whole Heart of Joy name isn't some ironic joke.



MEANWHILE, IN FRANCE . . .

Renault may not have a Corvette ZR1 (see far right) in its lineup, but the French automaker hopes to shatter some records of its own this year. The **Renault Filante Record 2025** doesn't preview an EV in the traditional sense; instead, it's a test bed that Renault will use to attempt new records for range and efficiency. The design pulls from both aerospace and historical Renault concepts, and much engineering effort went into minimizing mass. A unique battery layout, by-wire connections for braking and steering, and a whole lot of carbon fiber help keep the claimed curb weight down to around 2200 pounds, more than half of which comprises the battery alone. Overall, this Renault is almost the same weight as a 2017 Mitsubishi Mirage G4.

THE TURBO WITHOUT A TURBO

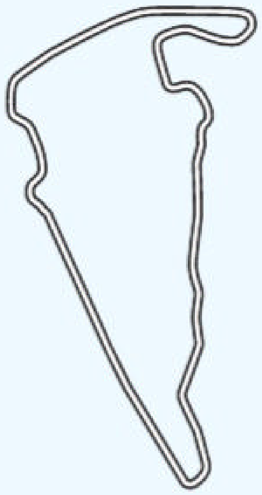
While the gas-powered Porsche Macan still exists, it tops out at the GTS. So, let's compare the new electric Porsche Macan Turbo with a GTS that has actual turbos. The 5440-pound EV overcomes its 1108-pound curbweight penalty with sheer power; the GTS's twin-turbo 2.9-liter V-6 makes 434 horsepower, but the Turbo offers up to 630 with launch control enabled. Unsurprisingly, the electric Macan proves quicker. Its 60-mph time of 2.9 seconds beats the GTS's by 0.6 second. The quarter-mile passes in 11.1 seconds, with the GTS a second behind. Around the skidpad, it's a standoff at 0.98 g. The GTS starts at $90,995, while the Turbo will remove at least $107,295 from your wallet.

FAST TRACK

Once upon a Time

THE 2025 CORVETTE ZR1 is on a mission to dominate every track it touches, and so far, it's succeeding. Chevrolet took its 1064-hp twin-turbocharged monster on a trip across the country, visiting some of the most famous racetracks in the U.S. With a variety of General Motors performance and dynamics engineers sliding behind the wheel, the new ZR1 destroyed five production-car track records, including one we hold very dear.

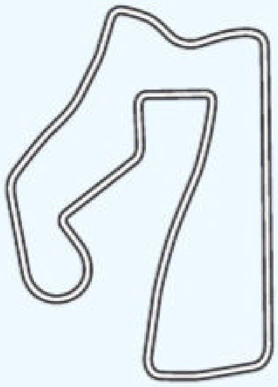
Virginia International Raceway, Full Course:
1:47.7



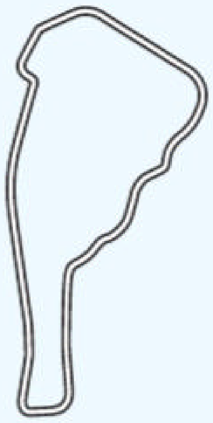
Virginia International Raceway, Grand Course:
2:32.3

VIR's Grand Course is where we conduct our annual Lightning Lap test. The ZR1's time is 2.6 seconds faster than our all-time Lightning Lap champ, the 2019 McLaren Senna.

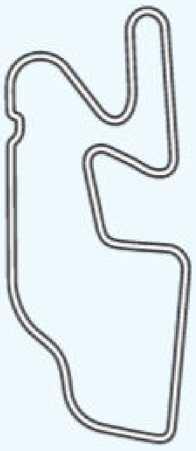
Road America:
2:08.6



Road Atlanta:
1:22.8



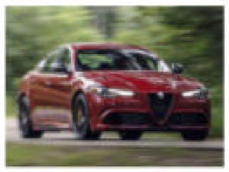
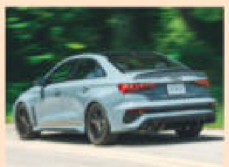
Watkins Glen International, Long Course:
1:52.7



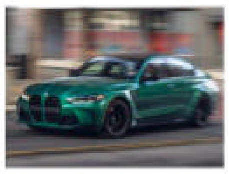
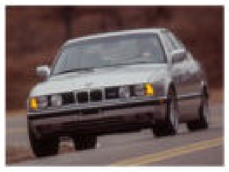
GOING FAST WITH THE FAM

Passing Judgments

WE LOVE SPORTS SEDANS, and the E39-generation BMW M5, including the 2001 model seen here, is one of the all-time greats—a legendary four-door gifted with an outstanding balance of ride and handling, fluid controls, a six-speed manual, and a rev-happy 394-hp 4.9-liter V-8. While German manufacturers have historically excelled at blending performance with sedan practicality and a good deal of refinement, standout examples in this segment have come from every corner of the world. The models listed below are some of our favorite three-box four-doors that we've tested over the years.

MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G	EPA COMB, MPG	
	$74,733	4.7/13.2‡	156	165	0.83	15	
 ACURA INTEGRA TYPE S (2024)	$53,785	5.1/13.7	167*	153	1.02	24	**HIGHS:** As engaging as a Honda Civic Type R but with a better ride, upscale interior materials and amenities, ripping exhaust note, those fender flares. **LOWS:** Slower than a Type R, costs more than the mechanically identical Type R, seats just four, the existence of the Type R. **VERDICT:** A Honda Civic Type R for folks who get colonoscopies. **AWARDS:** 10Best.
 ACURA TSX 6MT (2004)	$28,990	7.2/15.6‡	133	185	0.85	22	**HIGHS:** Buttery six-speed manual shifter, tractable 2.4-liter four with 200 horses and a 7100-rpm redline, crisp steering, playful and agile handling on any road. **LOWS:** Touchy throttle response, a few ponies shy of perfection, the all-season tires should be swapped for summer rubber. **VERDICT:** A tail-wagging puppy with four doors. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.
 **ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO (2024)**	$91,415	3.4/11.6	191*	154	0.94	20	**HIGHS:** Beautiful Italian curves, the sensations through the delicately thin-rimmed steering wheel, can comfortably cruise yet goads you into passing everybody, the frenzied snarl of the 505-hp twin-turbo 2.9-liter V-6. **LOWS:** Some chintzy interior bits, questionable reliability and service network. **VERDICT:** The kind of love your therapist thinks is bad for you. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.
 **AUDI RS3 (2022)**	$65,440	3.3/11.8	159	167	0.94	23	**HIGHS:** A 401-hp turbo five that sounds like Chewbacca, tail-sliding antics in drift mode, a potent sleeper at stoplights, commuter-friendly comfort. **LOWS:** You really have to like the thrum of the fiver when it's an A3 that can top $70,000 with options, compact interior dimensions. **VERDICT:** An updated and more refined four-door kitten with the heart of a lion.
 AUDI RS4 (2007)	$81,885	4.5/13.1‡	163	157	0.87	15	**HIGHS:** Graced with the 420-hp V-8 heart of the R8 supercar, all-wheel-drive traction, idiotproof handling despite a nose-heavy weight balance, impressive ride quality, upscale interior. **LOWS:** A little less raw than its competition from BMW and AMG, still pricey on the used market, small back seat. **VERDICT:** A civilized road rocket with the soul of a supercar.
 AUDI RS6 (2003)	$84,660	4.4/12.8‡	164	171	0.87	16	**HIGHS:** Bulldog grip, monster brakes erase mega speed, delightfully brash rumble from the 450-hp twin-turbo 4.2-liter V-8, attractively subdued design, excellent body control and ride comfort, limited production guarantees exclusivity. **LOWS:** Some low-speed understeer, jumpy throttle tip-in, dearly priced. **VERDICT:** An oft-forgotten heavy hitter from Ingolstadt. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.
 AUDI RS7 PERFORMANCE (2025)	$165,040	2.9/11.1	190*	143	1.06	17	**HIGHS:** Tapping the 621 horsepower under the hood, stopping power to match the twin-turbo V-8's thrust, awesome stability and grip, airy cabin feel, capacious cargo hold. **LOWS:** Modest seat padding is a pain in the butt, touchy brake and steering response, optional 22-inch wheels ding ride comfort. **VERDICT:** A dreamy combination of big-dollar speed and grace.

*MANUFACTURER CLAIM †*C/D* ESTIMATE ‡TIMES ADHERE TO OUR OLD ROLLOUT RULE OF 3 MPH **MPGe

	MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G	EPA COMB, MPG
	AUDI S6 (2007) **HIGHS:** The melodic voice of the Lamborghini-derived 5.2-liter V-10, unflappable poise on back roads, sophisticated design inside and out, all-day comfort. **LOWS:** The six-speed automatic tends to upshift on its own, punishingly firm ride. **VERDICT:** A fast and refined sweetheart priced to near irresistibility.	$78,320	5.4/13.8‡	155	166	0.87	16
	BMW 325i 5MT (1992) **HIGHS:** Head-turning modern design at the time, brakes feel cribbed from a Porsche, potent 2.5-liter inline-six, slick five-speed manual shifter, sure-footed handling. **LOWS:** Back seat is a bit tight for adults, interior quality and materials weren't great then and haven't aged well. **VERDICT:** The 3-series comes of age and reaches new heights. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$29,900	6.9/15.3‡	128	178	0.80	19
	BMW 330i 6MT (2003) **HIGHS:** Handsome styling; sports-car driving dynamics, especially with the Performance package that adds a six-speed manual, a shorter final-drive ratio, a massaged 235-hp inline-six, a sportier suspension, and 18-inch summer tires. **LOWS:** Fussy climate controls, BMW didn't make an E46-gen M3 sedan. **VERDICT:** Easily the best compact sports sedan of its day. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$40,095	5.6/14.3‡	152	158	0.86	21
	BMW M3 6MT (2008) **HIGHS:** Sublime 4.0-liter V-8 makes Grammy-worthy noises as it rocks out 414 horses at 8300 rpm, the ideal compromise between ride and handling, tireless brakes, refined enough to drive daily. **LOWS:** Maddening iDrive interface, slightly rubbery shifter, we thought it was heavy at 3680 pounds. **VERDICT:** Look for one on Bring a Trailer. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$64,450	4.1/12.6‡	161	161	0.95	16
	**BMW M3 6MT (2022)** **HIGHS:** A hall of fame–worthy inline-six, tenacious grip on track, luxurious cabin, supple ride, surprising real-world fuel economy. **LOWS:** Numb and light steering, base price tops $70K, going manual limits you to 473 horses, frustratingly complicated gauges, those nostrils. **VERDICT:** A good M3 that makes us long for the great M3s of the past.	$77,825	3.9/12.2	156	160	1.02	19
	BMW M5 (1988) **HIGHS:** Lovely 256-hp 3.5-liter inline-six delivers sports-car-like acceleration, sports-car-worthy brakes, leather-lined interior, easily controllable at the limit of grip, taut yet controlled ride motions, the outward vision. **LOWS:** Dated styling and awkward U.S.-spec 5-mph bumpers, available only in black, Europe got a 311-hp version, 1980s fuel economy. **VERDICT:** The birth of a legend.	$48,470	6.3/14.6‡	147	166	0.83	12
	**BMW M5 (1992)** **HIGHS:** Beautifully balanced on the road, a stirring 310-hp inline-six that storms to a 7250-rpm redline, perfectly weighted controls, satisfyingly high-quality accommodations, dignified curb presence. **LOWS:** Clutch pedal is heavy around town, steering column doesn't adjust, cabin looks spartan, seats only four. **VERDICT:** A luxury sedan with a legendary engine. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	$64,760	5.6/14.3‡	156	169	0.82	14
	BMW M5 (2006) **HIGHS:** Yowling 8250-rpm V-10 cranks out 500 ponies, as competent on a racetrack as it is on the street, abundant drive settings were novel at the time. **LOWS:** Clunky SMG automated manual, dealing with iDrive, the six-speed manual BMW eventually put in felt like (and was) an afterthought. **VERDICT:** Brilliance both enhanced and hobbled by technology. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	$91,890	4.2/12.5‡	161	158	0.89	13
	BMW M5 CS (2022) **HIGHS:** Holy-hell quick, 4096 pounds is light by modern standards, more engaging and fun to drive than the Competition model, still as refined as the standard M5. **LOWS:** Still-muted steering, a 627-hp V-8 shouldn't need an artificial backing track, uncomfortable carbon-fiber performance seats, BMW's drive-mode settings are getting out of hand. **VERDICT:** The M5 trades some grace for all-out performance.	$148,995	2.6/10.6	190*	150	1.02	17
	CADILLAC CTS-V 6MT (2009) **HIGHS:** Hard-charging 556-hp supercharged V-8 and a six-speed manual, textbook steering, happy on the street or on track, versatile magnetorheological dampers, you could also get a wagon! **LOWS:** Abrupt rev limiter, porky at 4277 pounds, optional Recaros had the cushioning of wooden church pews, snug back seat. **VERDICT**: Not quite the standard of the world but darn close. **AWARDS:** 10Best.	$67,345	4.1/12.4	191*	162	0.90	16

KNOW YOUR TERMS Sedans are four-door cars with a **three-box** design, indicating separate compartments for the engine, cabin, and trunk (see right). The name "sedan" traces its roots to the **sedan chair**, a single-seat litter carried by servants that gained popularity in the 17th century (we tested one for our April 1992 issue). Our favorite type of sedan is the **sports sedan**, named for the priority its maker puts on performance. Also, it's never "sport sedan" because no one drives a "sport car."

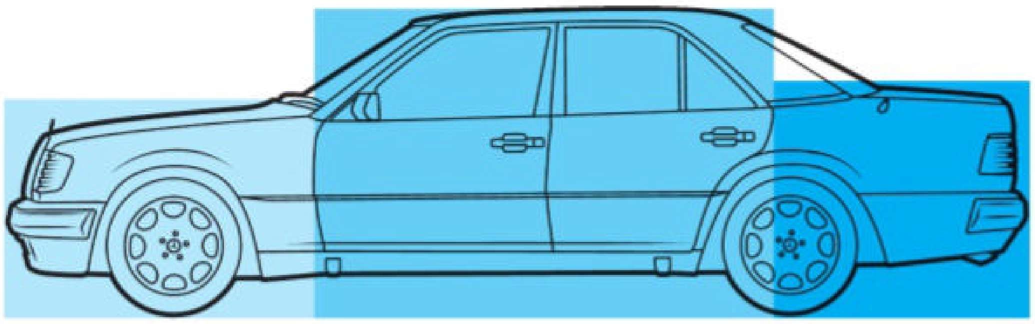
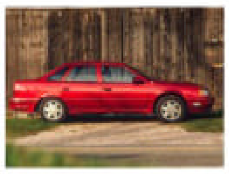
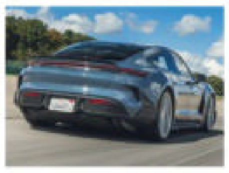
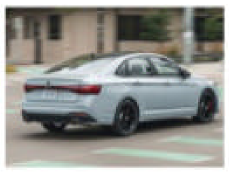


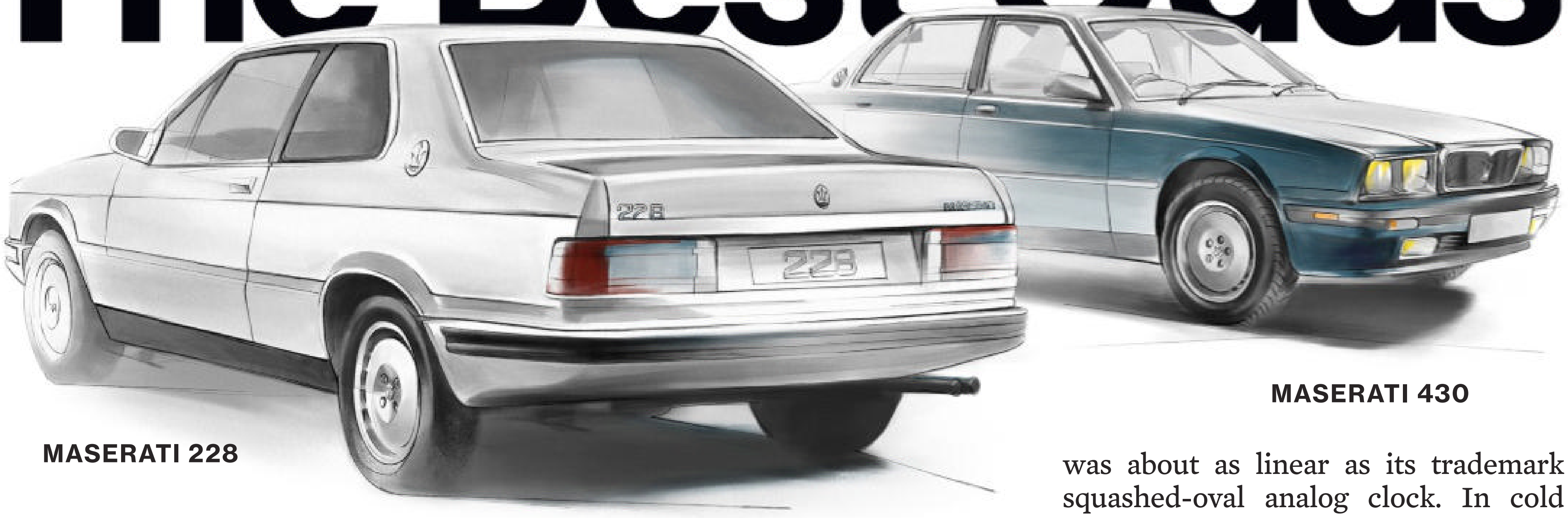
ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PHILPOT

	MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G	EPA COMB, MPG
	CADILLAC CTS-V (2018) **HIGHS:** The way it steers, the way it grips, the way it rides, unleashing the blown 6.2-liter V-8's 640 horses, small-block idle tremors in a luxury car, menacing good looks. **LOWS:** Trying to put the V-8's power to the ground, Caddy's interior designers apparently thought they were working on a Chevrolet, CUE infotainment system still stinks. **VERDICT:** A couple of base runners short of a grand slam.	$102,935	3.8/11.9	200*	148	1.01	17
	CADILLAC CT4-V BLACKWING 6MT (2022) **HIGHS:** Cadillac nails the ride-and-handling compromise, wonderfully honest steering feel, strong brakes, positive engagements from the six-speed gearbox, just-right size. **LOWS:** Deserves a V-8, cramped rear seat, uninspired interior design, limited cruising range. **VERDICT:** One of the best sports sedans of all time. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$76,040	4.0/12.4	189*	153	1.01	18
	CADILLAC CT5-V BLACKWING 6MT (2022) **HIGHS:** Ridiculous thrust from the supercharged 6.2-liter V-8, excellent steering tuning, sports-car-like handling, can set a fast lap time in the morning and go to the opera at night, reasonably priced compared with its rivals. **LOWS:** Voracious thirst, some crummy interior materials. **VERDICT:** Cadillac perfects the sports sedan just in time for no one to care. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$114,645	3.6/11.6	205†	154	1.02	15
	CHEVROLET SS 6MT (2017) **HIGHS:** A compelling fusion of Camaro SS and BMW M5 vibes, superb chassis balance, impressive grip and braking figures, the meaty growl of a 415-hp 6.2-liter V-8, handsome and spacious interior, well equipped for the money. **LOWS:** Easily mistaken for a Chevy Malibu, painfully underappreciated in its day. **VERDICT:** The last of GM's fun-but-failed imports from Down Under. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	$49,915	4.4/12.9	160†	156	0.96	17
	**FORD TAURUS SHO (1991)** **HIGHS:** The roaring and wonderful Yamaha-built V-6 made an incredible (at the time) 220 horsepower, the thrill of wringing it to its 7300-rpm redline, buttoned-down handling, slippery styling, family-sedan practicality. **LOWS:** Notchy five-speed manual shifter, looks too understated for some tastes. **VERDICT:** A breakthrough performance sedan for the average Joe. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$24,716	6.6/15.2‡	140	183	0.77	19
	DODGE CHARGER SRT HELLCAT REDEYE (2021) **HIGHS:** A tire-melting 797 horsepower with a side of supercharger whine, wake-the-dead exhaust rumble, respectable handling for a 4654-pound bruiser, everyday drivability, muscular wide-body treatment, cavernous interior space. **LOWS:** A binge drinker at the pump, a loose cannon in untrained hands, heavy low-speed steering, lumpy sport seats. **VERDICT:** A big American sedan taken to brutal excess.	$90,060	3.5/11.5	203*	155	0.93	15
	HONDA ACCORD SPORT 2.0T (2018) **HIGHS:** Punchy 252-hp turbo 2.0-liter four, satisfying six-speed manual shifter, nicely managed torque steer, stout grip even on all-season tires, weighs a wiry 3283 pounds, elegantly understated design, generous rear-seat space. **LOWS:** Economy-car levels of road noise, slightly muted steering, Honda doesn't make them like this anymore. **VERDICT:** A family sedan with a youthful spirit. **AWARDS:** 10Best.	$31,200	6.0/14.6	125	164	0.87	26
	HONDA CIVIC Si (2022) **HIGHS:** Grips and handles like a sports car, always takes the fun way home, the joy of working the six-speed manual shifter, approachable pricing, attractively styled inside and out. **LOWS:** Brakes go soft when worked hard, 200 horsepower isn't what it used to be, ultralight clutch pedal is tricky to modulate around town. **VERDICT:** Nothing here 30 more horsepower wouldn't fix. **AWARDS:** 10Best.	$28,910	6.6/14.9	135†	154	0.96	31
	HONDA CIVIC TYPE R (2023) **HIGHS:** Tenacious handling, dual-axis struts practically eliminate torque steer, rorty turbo four, rideshare-friendly back seat, quickest front-driver at Lightning Lap, cosseting sport seats. **LOWS:** Can be noisy inside, explaining to your friends why your Civic has red carpets. **VERDICT:** Unfathomably great, no "for a front-driver" qualifier needed. **AWARDS:** 10Best, comparison-test win.	$44,385	4.9/13.5	169*	153	1.02	24
	HYUNDAI ELANTRA N 6MT (2022) **HIGHS:** As fun as it is affordable, responsive steering and chassis tuning, raucous four-cylinder blat, a joy on the street and on the racetrack, still has a manual hand brake. **LOWS:** Ride quality and sport seats are too firm for some, dour interior, exhaust note may be too juvenile for adults. **VERDICT:** Type R–adjacent shenanigans at a blue-collar price. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	$33,345	5.1/13.8	155†	154	0.99	25
	LEXUS IS F (2011) **HIGHS:** Rapid-fire shifts from the eight-speed automatic, 416-hp 5.0-liter V-8 emits a soulful bellow, Lexus retuned the steering and suspension and added a Torsen limited-slip differential in 2011, sharp responses, calm and comfortable when driven casually. **LOWS:** Busy shift programming, no manual available, runs in a cutthroat class of all-stars. **VERDICT:** A scrappy muscle sedan with Lexus manners.	$67,097	4.6/13.0	169	159	0.90	18
	LUCID AIR SAPPHIRE (2024) **HIGHS:** 1234 horsepower, 1234 horsepower, 1234 horsepower, 427 miles of EPA-estimated range, works brilliantly on a racetrack, making your friends carsick. **LOWS:** Supercar-rivaling price, weighs 5345 pounds, hope you like blue because that's the only color available. **VERDICT:** Did you ever think a sports sedan would have 1234 horsepower?	$250,500	2.1/9.3	207	151	1.04	105**

*MANUFACTURER CLAIM †*C/D* ESTIMATE ‡TIMES ADHERE TO OUR OLD ROLLOUT RULE OF 3 MPH **MPGe

	MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G	EPA COMB, MPG
	MERCEDES-AMG C63 S (2019) **HIGHS:** Sounds like thunder, big-time power, adjustable AMG traction control is magic on a racetrack, junior S-class design and interior. **LOWS:** Choppy ride on pockmarked roads, twin turbos slightly muffle the 4.0-liter V-8's roar, convoluted launch-control and drive-mode settings, excessive tire noise, $98K for a C-class? **VERDICT:** A Honda Civic–sized sedan with 503 horsepower.	$97,630	3.6/11.8	180*	157	1.02	21
	MERCEDES-AMG E63 S 4MATIC (2018) **HIGHS:** A twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8 that growls and barks its way to a howling 7000 rpm, blistering starts with all-wheel drive and launch control, rear-drive fun in Drift mode, opulent cabin, also available as a wagon. **LOWS:** Flinty ride quality, fickle chassis balance when pushed hard, options quickly inflate the already-steep $105,395 base price. **VERDICT:** A 603-hp hooligan wearing a three-piece suit.	$134,600	2.8/10.9	186*	153	1.01	18
	MERCEDES-BENZ C63 AMG (2010) **HIGHS:** Intoxicating sound and fury from the 6.2-liter V-8; solid structure; great sport seats; crisp steering; AMG Development package ups horsepower from 451 to 481, adds stronger brakes, and increases the top speed from 155 to 174 mph. **LOWS:** Bucking ride, aggressive thirst, chunky 3992-pound curb weight. **VERDICT:** Even the base version is extreme enough to qualify for Black Series status.	$77,105	3.9/12.3‡	174	165	0.91	15
	MERCEDES-BENZ 500E (1992) Mercedes farmed out development and assembly of the hand-built 500E (later renamed E500) to Stuttgart neighbor Porsche. The 500E introduced the V-8 to the segment, and the tasteful fender flares housed larger wheels and tires from the 500SL. Having Porsche build a Mercedes isn't cheap: Adjusted for inflation, the 500E base price is about $200,000 in 2025 dollars. **HIGHS:** Smooth 322-hp 5.0-liter V-8, balanced handling and precise steering help it change direction like a car half its size, beautifully composed at speed, stout brakes, tanklike construction, elegant interior. **LOWS:** Cost over $20K more than the BMW M5 of its day, traction control can't be turned off, automatic only. **VERDICT:** An AMG in everything but the name.	$88,685	5.5/14.1‡	156	166	0.85	14
	MERCEDES-BENZ AMG HAMMER PROTOTYPE (1986) **HIGHS:** AMG-modified 5.5-liter V-8 churns out 355 horses; 1980s-supercar-rivaling acceleration, braking, grip, and top speed; effortlessly devours miles; E-class comfort and practicality; highly exclusive; worth big bucks today. **LOWS:** Its $125K base price equates to $361K in today's dollars, "U Can't Touch This" is stuck in my head. **VERDICT:** A supersedan with performance 20 years ahead of its time.	$137,000	5.0/13.5‡	178	165	0.85	N/A
	MITSUBISHI LANCER EVOLUTION VIII MR (2005) **HIGHS:** Rally car for the street; steering, brakes, and reflexes that humble most sports cars; massive tuning potential; all-wheel drive and five seats lend it some practicality. **LOWS:** Drab econocar interior, turbo lag is a fact of life, notoriously high-strung nature limits appeal, stiff ride will shake your jiggly bits. **VERDICT:** Proof that sedan and sports car are not mutually exclusive concepts. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	$36,074	4.8/13.6‡	152	157	0.93	19
	PONTIAC G8 GXP 6MT (2009) **HIGHS:** A Corvette-derived 415-hp small-block V-8, manages its 3980 pounds with poise and satisfying feedback, long-haul comfort and stretch-out space, a performance-sedan bargain. **LOWS:** Skimpy 245-series tires limit grip, the manual's infuriating first-to-fourth skip-shift feature, short on amenities, only a handful were imported before Pontiac got axed. **VERDICT:** A great effort, poorly timed.	$41,500	4.7/13.3‡	146	156	0.85	15
	**PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT (2025)** **HIGHS:** The quickest car to 60 mph we've ever tested, awesome grip and improved balance with the optional Pirelli P Zero Trofeo RS Elect tires, trick active dampers eat up bumps. **LOWS:** Still weighs over two and a half tons, less than 300 miles of EPA-rated range, it costs how much? **VERDICT:** Porsche's track-focused formula works on EVs too.	$250,575	1.9/9.3	180	141	1.08	82**
	SUBARU IMPREZA WRX STI (2004) **HIGHS:** Deft responses, fat powerband makes it surprisingly tractable around town, ultrapositive shift engagements, impressive stability at the limit. **LOWS:** Stubborn understeer takes some spice out of this wasabi pea, underwhelming interior, modest support from relaxed-fit bucket seats, wing quivers in the rearview mirror. **VERDICT:** The hot Subaru that U.S. enthusiasts long dreamed about.	$31,520	4.6/13.2‡	145	166	0.90	18
	**VOLKSWAGEN JETTA GLI 6MT (2025)** **HIGHS:** Playful driving demeanor, the six-speed manual elevates the driving experience, spacious interior, secure handling, civilized ride. **LOWS:** Exhaust drones when cruising in Sport mode, fussy steering-wheel audio controls, all-season tires only, seats lack lateral support. **VERDICT:** An increasingly rare thing: an affordable sports sedan with three pedals.	$35,045	6.0/14.5	126	177	0.88	30

The Best Odds


MASERATI 228

MASERATI 430

The cars I recall most fondly were neither the prettiest nor the quickest. Certainly not the most expensive. They were machines that emerged willfully peculiar and intractably idiosyncratic. by John Phillips

IN THE LATE ’80s, David E. Davis Jr. and I drove a Range Rover through the Anza-Borrego Desert, hoping Anza might be the name of a Spanish beauty. As we crested a dune capable of swallowing Larry Bird, the A/C disgorged its refrigerant into the arid air. “I wouldn’t drive this thing out here without a chase car,” I commented. But Davis adored all things British, including the tweed hunting cape and Turnbull & Asser shirts he’d packed for the trip. Replied he, “Oh, shut up. If the Rover dies, we just call Bill Baker.” Baker being Rover’s beloved PR purveyor of tectonic spin.

My point? Auto journalists don’t have to fix, patch, or tow test cars that are notoriously in want of fixing, patching, and towing. Fact is, I have sometimes underreported reliability dramas.

Having dispensed with that confession, here’s another: I’ve reaped untold pleasure from 1989 and ’90 Maserati 228s and 430s. They were the coupes and sedans known as Biturbos. Both overflowed with personality, temperament, and inadvertent exclusivity, even as they issued onto our byways molten bearings the size of jujubes. Styling was, uh, uncluttered, like a third-place finisher in a Honda Accord design contest. The 430 wanted to compete with the Mercedes-Benz 300E. It did not. The 228 wanted to compete with the BMW 635CSi. It did not. Nonetheless, I once drove a Biturbo coupe 220 miles simply to share dinner with my parents. Back then, maybe nine people in America realized affordable Maseratis existed.

Power derived from an engaging 225-hp twin-turbocharged 2.8-liter V-6, the first *doppio* turbo in my experience. I cherished its whiskey-throated yowl as the engine revved to 3500 rpm, where you’d locate the first ounce of oomph. In first gear—to the left of the pattern, out of the H—you could bark the rear Michelins hard enough to scare cats. Sixty mph was claimed to arrive in around six seconds, the full monty back then.

Handling? Think Ford Mustang, with power oversteer that begged attention in the rain, intimidated on gravel, and induced rigor mortis in snow. No anti-lock brakes, of course.

At the time, Maserati’s interiors recollected the Gritti Palace’s: Dazzling burled wood on the dash, gearshift, hand brake, and steering wheel. Hand-sewn leather, chamois, and synthetic suede on the A-pillars, map pockets, dashtop, sun visors, headliner, and center console. Door panels awash in gelatinous rolls and pleats of cowskin, stitched loosely in heaping handfuls. The 430 briefly became my haven after stressful editorial meetings, in part for the fragrance. Wrote one of us, “I wish I had underwear that felt this good.”

Quirky? Turns out “quirky” is Italian for “calm down and drink some Lambrusco.” The Biturbo’s steering was about as linear as its trademark squashed-oval analog clock. In cold weather, the idle danced from 800 to 1900 rpm. The power steering wheezed when 30 degrees off-center, perhaps in sympathy with the shifter rattling like a diamondback. Even the push-button horn evoked a bovine snort preceded by bonus wheezing. One vital chapter in the owner’s manual was “Storage for Periods of Inactivity over Six Months.”

Help me—I’ve fallen for another Italian, and I can’t get up. While prone, I noticed that the coupe was over five inches wider than the sedan, for more pleasing proportions. Who else does that?

Compared with the Chrysler TC by Maserati—the most abjectly wretched mechanical contrivance in human history—the Biturbos’ build quality felt almost ascendant. Well, as long as you enjoyed zoolike underhood noises. Did I just hear the whistle of a dik-dik?

At his home in Modena’s Hotel Canalgrande, the chief rascal himself, Alejandro de Tomaso, told me: “You Americans say, ‘The electric windows must go up 12 million times.’ Maybe our window goes up only 500 times. But the irritation of fixing it is overcome by the sensuous nature of the car.”

Maserati eventually began paying $500 for any Biturbo that stranded its driver 150 miles from home. You’d still be stranded in West Lumpdick, Iowa, of course. But at least you could afford a Grand Slam at Denny’s.

That’s how I dealt with it. ■

Scan the QR code to read our May 1986 road test of the Maserati Biturbo 425.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXIS MARCOU

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The smooth curves, sharp angles, and sporty design of the Kia K4 are a sight to behold in any environment. But, with an available 1.6L turbocharged engine and an available 29.6-inch combined wide-screen display, with standard wireless Apple CarPlay® for your iPhone,® the best place to admire the K4 is on the open road.

2025 K4 GT-Line Turbo shown with optional features. Some features may vary. Limited inventory available. Comprised of a 12.3-in. instrument display, 5-in. climate display, and 12.3-in. touch-screen infotainment display. Apple CarPlay,® Siri,® and iPhone® are registered trademarks of Apple Inc.